Man's True Guide to Heaven.

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Fred Perry
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MAN'S TRUE GUIDE TO HEAVEN.

1. TEACHING HIM HOW TO BECOME A TRUE CHRISTIAN.
2. TEACHING HIM HOW TO LIVE AS A TRUE CHRISTIAN.
3. TEACHING HIM HOW TO DIE AS A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

IN CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN A TEACHER AND A LEARNER.

TAKEN FROM

BAXTER'S FAMILY BOOK.

A. D. 1672.

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TORONTO.
BELL, HAWKINS & CO., CITY STEAM PRESS,
1877.

Dear Reader—

Permit me to ask, Are you anxious to come to the knowledge of the truth, and answer to your own conscience the all important question, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" If in this spirit of enquiry you peruse these pages, it can only result in your being wiser and better.

Of the author of this work (the Rev. Richard Baxter), we can say that in an age of great men he was "a great man among great men," ever fearless and valiant for the truth, a very Cromwell on the fields of Bible controversy, and always on the side of freedom and truth. So successful as an author was he in his day, that one work, entitled "His Call to the Unconverted," reached the extraordinary circulation of twenty thousand copies in one year.

In offering a reprint of this valuable book to the reading public, we make no apology. We seek no financial gain by this undertaking. Having been greatly blessed ourselves by the perusal of "Man's True Guide to Heaven," we send it forth to the world in the hope that others may reap benefit from the rich gems of thought by which its pages abound.

Yours, "with malice to none and charity for all,"

THE PUBLISHER.

PREFACE.

In preparing this Work for publication, in a manner adapted for general usefulness at the present time, it has been found necessary to make the following alterations :—

First. As the original title would exclude this volume from a large portion of readers for whose use it is peculiarly suitable, another title has been adopted of a general nature.

Second. It has been found necessary, in order to preserve the connexion of the dialogue, or to supply some deficiency, to add here and there a few sentences connecting the different subjects together : these are enclosed between brackets [ ], so that the reader will easily distinguish them.

Third. The obsolete words are exchanged for others of similar meaning.

The present abridgment being freed from the numerous digressions of the original Work, will be found calculated for general usefulness among plain readers of the present day.

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MAN'S TRUE GUIDE TO HEAVEN.

THE FIRST CONFERENCE.

THE CONVICTION OF AN UNCONVERTED SINNER.

SPEAKERS.

PAUL, *a pastor.*
SAUL, *an ignorant sinner.*

PAUL. When I saw you last, neighbour, I told you that both my love to you, and my office, do bind me, besides my public preaching, to watch over every person of my flock, and to instruct and help them man by man, as far as I am able, and they consent. Thus Christ himself instructed sinners, John iv. and iii. 1, 2, &c., and thus must we. You know we cannot speak so familiarly, and come so close to every one's case, in a common sermon, as we may do by talking to them. And in conversation it is not a little rambling discourse upon the by that is fit for so great a business; and therefore I entreat you to allow me now and then an hour's serious and sober talk with you, when all other matters might for that time be laid by; and I am now come to claim it as you promised.

SAUL. You are welcome, sir; I confess to you, that, being ignorant and unlearned, I am loth to talk with such a man as you about high matters and

things of religion, which I do not well understand; but because you desire it I could not say nay.

P. You shall see that I come not to dispute with you, or to cavil, or to do you any harm, nor to puzzle you with any needless questions, nor to try your learning; but only to help you before you die to make sure of everlasting life.

S. I have so much reason myself, as to know that Christ's ministers are like nurses, that must cut every child his meat as it is fit for him; and that if I were sick, it is not a long speech of my physician that will serve to cure me; but he must come and see me, and feel my pulse, and find out my disease, and then tell me what will do me good, and how to take it. But to tell you the truth, sir, there are so many busy fellows that love to meddle with other folk's matters, and censure others, and do but trouble men, either to draw them to their own opinions, or else to make themselves teachers, and to seem better than they are themselves, that I was at first unwilling you should trouble me with such matters; till I thought with myself that I am one of your charge, and till I heard how discreetly, and tenderly, and well you spoke to those that have been with you. And now I am ready to receive your instruction.

P. But I have this one request to you before we begin, that we may do all with reverence as in the presence of God, and beg His blessing; and that you will not be offended with me if I speak freely, and come close to you; as long as you know that I have no ends of my own, but only in love to seek the salvation of your soul; and it is not flattery that will cure disease or save souls.

S. I confess man's nature loveth not to be shamed

or troubled; but yet God forbid that I should be offended with you for seeking my own good; for I know you are wiser than I, and know by your life and labour that it is nothing but our salvation that you seek.

P. I pray you tell me what case do you take your soul to be in for another world? 1 Pet. iii. 15; and what do you think would become of you if you should die this day?

S. God knows what He will do with us all; I know not; but we must hope the best, and put our trust in the mercy of God.

P. No doubt but God knows; but do you think that we may not know ourselves? 2 Cor. xiii. 5. May not a man know certainly whether he shall be be saved or not?

S. I think not; we can but hope well, but not be sure. For who can tell the secrets of God?

P. Cannot a man know it if God should tell him?

S. Yes; but God tells nobody his mind.

P. Do you not think the Holy Scripture is God's word? John v. 39; Mark 14, 49; xii. 24; 2 Tim. iii. 16; and that whatever it tells us, that God tells us?

S. Yes; I cannot deny that.

P. Do you believe that there is another life after this? Matt. xxv., Heb. ix. 27, and that man dieth not like a dog, but that his soul goeth either to heaven or hell?

S. Yes; that must not be denied.

P. Seeing heaven is an inconceivable glory, and hell the most inexpressible misery, do you not think that there must needs be a very great difference between those that go to heaven and those that go to hell? Matt. xxv., Psa. i., Mal. iii. 17, 18, Rom. viii. 5—7, 9.

S. Yes, no doubt; God is not unjust; He would not take one to heaven and send another to hell if they were both alike.

P. And do you think that there is so great a difference, and yet that it cannot be known? Is a godly man and a wicked man so like that they cannot be known asunder by themselves, if they will?

S. Nobody knoweth the heart but God.

P. Another cannot infallibly know it, further than the life declareth it; but cannot you know your own? 2 Cor. xiii. 5; 1 John iii. 14, 24; iv. 13; v. 19, 20. Cannot you know what you love and what you hate?

S. No doubt but a man may know his own mind.

P. Very good! and you hear the Scripture read, where there are abundance of promises made to the godly, both for this life and that to come; and terrible threatening to the ungodly? To what use and purpose were all these if no one could know whether he were godly or ungodly? Who could take any comfort in the promises, if he could not know that they belong to him.

S. Not unless he have some guess or hope.

P. And do you not hear in 2 Pet. i. 10, that we must give all diligence to make our calling and election sure? And 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." Do you think God would bid men try, and examine, and make sure if it were impossible?

S. No, sure; we must do our best; but who can tell who are elected and who are reprobates, which are God's secrets?

P. You cannot know before they are converted,

whom God will convert and whom not. But when He converteth a sinner He sets his name and mark upon him; not outwardly only, as you do on your sheep or goods; but inwardly, as the parents convey their own nature and likeness to their children, John iii. 3, 5; Rom. viii. 9; Matt. xviii. 3; Tit. ii. 13, 14; 2 Cor. v. 17; that is, He regenerateth and sanctifieth them; He putteth into them a holy nature, a new mind and a new will, and turneth them to a new life; and may not all this be known? Cannot God's elect be known to themselves, when He hath given them the Spirit of Christ, and made them new creatures, and set His certain mark upon them? Did you never hear, "The foundation," or obligation, "of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," 2 Tim. ii. 19. God knoweth whom He will convert and save from eternity; but when men believe in Christ and depart from iniquity, then they have His seal of election upon them, and by it they may know themselves that they are His.

S. I cannot deny what you say, for it is plain.

P. I pray you to tell me further—Have you not read or heard that one sort are called in Scripture the children of God, and are said to have His nature and His image, 2 Pet. i. 4; 2 Pet. i. 3, 4; 15—17; and therefore are said to be regenerated and born again, and born of God, and begotten by incorruptible seed to a lively hope and a never fading crown in heaven, and are made holy as He is holy? And the other sort are called the children of the devil, John viii. 44; 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26; 1 John iii. 8—10; Acts xviii. 10; and said to be of him and to be ruled as captives by him, and do his works and will?

And dare you think that God and the devil are so like, as that their image, and nature, and works, and children cannot be known one from another?

S. I dare not think so. God forbid.

P. And have you not heard in Scripture abundance of particular marks laid down, by which we may know whether we are the children of God? And can you think that they are all laid down in vain?

S. No; none of the Word of God is in vain.

P. And do you not hear expressly that by these marks we may know that we are the children of God? 2 Cor. i. 12; Gal. vi. 4; Heb. iii. 6; Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4; Psa. xxxiii. 1; Rom. v. 2; 1 Thes. v. 16; 1 Pet. i. 6, 8;—and that knowing it, we may rejoice, even with unspeakable, glorious joy? And that believers are commanded to rejoice in the Lord, yea, always to rejoice? and God's word cannot be false, nor doth it command the ungodly thus to rejoice, Hos. ix. 1. Therefore, certainly a man may know whether he is the child of God or not.

S. I never thought of so much before as you have told me; I cannot deny it. But I must confess that I have no such knowledge of myself.

P. Be not offended with me if I freely proceed upon your own confession. Have you no assurance of your salvation? nor certain knowledge what case your soul is in? Tell me truly, what care, what diligent labour have you used to have made all sure? 2 Pet. i. 10; Isa. lv. 1, 6, 10; Matt. vi. 33; John vi. 27. Is it because you could not get assurance? or because you would not do your part? Can you truly say that you have set your heart upon the matter, and made it the greatest of your care and labour in this world, and left nothing undone which

you were able to do, to make sure of everlasting life?

S. I would I could say so; but I confess I cannot; God forgive me, I have had some few thoughts of these matters now and then; but I never laid out such serious thoughts, such earnest labours upon them as you speak of.

P. Have you not? I am sorry to hear it; but I pray you tell me what is it that hath hindered you.

S. Alas, sir, many things have hindered me, Matt. xiii. 22; Luke viii. 14; xxi. 34; Rom. viii. 6—8; Phil. iii. 19; Psa. x. 3, 4. One is, the cares, and business, and crosses of this world, which have taken up my mind and time. And another is, the vain pleasures of the flesh, the delights of sense. Something or other so took me up that my mind had no leisure nor room for God.

P. And do you think you have done well and wisely? Will this course serve your turn for ever? What have you now to show of all the pleasures that sin afforded you, ever since you were born? What now are you the better for every merry hour that's past? for every playful day or company? for every wanton lust and dalliance? "All is vanity and vexation," Eccl. i. 2, 3, &c. Tell me how, what good, what sweetness, what inward comfort is left behind? what the better are you now for all? And are you not sure that an end will come, and shortly come? Luke xii. 19, 20. And where then are all your delights and merriments? Do you think that death is made more safe and comfortable, or more dangerous and terrible by the remembrance of all the sinful pleasures of a fleshly life? Go, try if you can comfort a dying man (that is not mad) by telling him that he hath had a life of sport and pleasure;

or that he had plenty of eating and drinking and carnal pleasure for so long a time; and that he hath had his good things here, Luke xvi. 25; and that this world hath done for him all that it can do, and now he must part with it forever. Go, try whether death be more comfortable to the rich man who is clothed in purple and silk, and fareth sumptuously or deliciously every day, than to a Lazarus that waiteth in patient poverty for a better life?

S. I know all this: and yet this world hath a marvellous power to blind men's minds, and take up their hearts, and turn their thoughts from better things.

P. It's true with those who are blind already, and never had spiritual wisdom or holy inclination to mind God or any thing truly good. But if men were well in their wits, could the pleasures of the flesh for a moment be preferred before holy everlasting pleasures? Could they be quieted in all their misery with the pride and pelf of a few days, and which they know they must shortly leave for ever? Could a life that is posting so speedily to its end make men forget an endless life? But tell me, neighbour, did you not know all this while that you must die? you must certainly die? you must shortly die? And did you not know that when death cometh time is gone, for ever gone, and all the world cannot recall it? Did you not know that your business in this world was to prepare for heaven—Matt. vi. 19, 20, 33—and to do all that ever must be done for your everlasting hope and happiness? and that it must go with all men in heaven and hell as they have prepared here?

S. I have heard all this, but it was with a dull and sleepy mind; it did not stir me up to sober consideration, because I hoped still for longer life,

P. But you know that the longest life must have an end. Where now are all that lived before us? And, alas! what are a hundred years when they are gone? what now is all your time that is past? But tell me further: what shift made you all this while with your conscience? Did you never think of the end of all your prosperity?—1 Pet. 4, 7; Luke xii. 19, 20; 2 Pet. iii. 11; Ps. xxxvii. 37, 38, &c.; Rom. vi. 21, 22; 2 Cor. xi. 15; Phil. iii. 19—and of your soul's appearing in another world? Do you not pass through the churchyard, and see the graves, and tread upon the dust of those that have lived in the pleasures of the world before you? Have you not seen the graves opened, and the carcases of your neighbours left there in the silent darkness? And did you not know that all this must be your own condition? And is such a life better than heaven? and such a corruptible body fit to be pampered with all the care and labor of our lives, whilst our souls are almost forgotten and neglected?

S. God forgive us; we forget all this, though we have daily and hourly remembrances, till death is just upon us, and then we do perceive our folly —Ps. lxxviii. 33-35, &c. I was once sick, and like to die; and then I was troubled for fear what would become of me. And I fully resolved to mend my life. But when I was recovered, all wore off, and the world and the flesh took place again.

P. But you are a man, and have the use of reason. When you confess that you are unready to die, and have done no more to make sure work for your soul, tell me, what shift make you to lie down quietly to sleep, lest you should die and be past hope before the morning? Are you not afraid in

the morning lest you should die before night, and never have time of repentance more? What shift make you to forget that if you die unready and unconverted, you are a lost and miserable man for ever? Are you sure at night to live till morning? Prov. xxvii. 1; Matt. xxiv. 14; Luke xii. 19, 20, 40. Are you sure in the morning to live till night? Are you not sure that it will not be long? Do you not know by what a wonder of providence we live? How many hundred veins, and arteries, and sinews, and other parts our bodies have, which must every one be kept in order? So that if one break or be stopped, or if our blood do but corrupt, or our other nourishing moisture be distempered, or our spirits be quenched, how quickly are we gone? And dare you wilfully or negligently live one day, unprepared for death in so slippery and uncertain a life as this?

S. You say well; but for all this uncertainty I thank God I have lived until now.

P. And will you turn God's patience and mercy into presumption, to the hardening of your heart and the delaying of your repentance? Will He always wait your leisure? As long as you have lived, will not death come, and shortly come? And where are you then, and what will you do next? Have you ever soberly bethought you what it is for a soul to take its farewell of this world, and presently to appear in another world, a world of spirits good or bad, and to be judged according to our preparation in this life—Matt. xxv.—and to take up a place in heaven or hell, without any hope forever changing?

S. You trouble me and make me afraid by this talk; but death will not be prevented. And why,

then, should we begin our fears too soon? They will come time enough of themselves. The fear of death is a greater pain than death itself.

P. Alas! is dying all that you look at? Though death cannot be prevented, damnation may be prevented. Dying is a small matter, were it not for what cometh next. But can hell be escaped without fear, and care, and serious diligence? or had you rather be condemned for ever than be frightened to your duty and from your sin and danger? Is hell easier than a little necessary fear and care? If you were either a beast or a devil, there were some sense in what you say. For if you were a beast, you had nothing after death to fear; and therefore the fear of death beforehand would do no good, but increase your sorrow; and if you were a devil, there were no hope; and therefore you might desire not to be tormented before the time, for it will come time enough at last. But God be thanked neither of these is your case; you must live for ever And you may live in heavenly joys for ever if you will. And are not these things then to be forethought of?

S. Really, sir, I am afraid if I should but set myself to think of another world, and the state of my soul, as seriously as you talk of it, it would frighten me out of my wits; it would make me melancholy or mad. I have seen some people moped and melancholy with being so serious about such things; and therefore do not blame me to be afraid of it.

P. God be thanked that you have yet your reason; and seeing you have it, will you study of these few questions following?

1. What did God give you your reason for, and

make you different from a beast, but to use it in preparation for an endless life? And is it madness to use our reason for that which it was given us for, and which we are made and live for?

2. Is not that man actually mad already who hath a God to serve, and a soul to save, and a heaven to get, and a hell to escape, and a death to prepare for, and spends his life in worldly fooleries that all perish in the using—Luke xii. 20; Ps. xiv. 1, xcii. 6; Jer. xvii. 11; Prov. xiv. 9; Eccl. v. 1, 4; Luke xxiv. 25—and leaveth all this work undone? Is he not mad, and worse than mad, that setteth more by these trifles than by his God; and setteth more by a little meat and drink and beastly pleasure, for a few days, than by an endless heavenly glory? that careth more for a body that must rot in the earth than for a never-dying soul? that spareth no pains to avoid shame and poverty and sickness, and will do little or nothing to avoid everlasting shame and pain and horror in hell? Tell me, if your wife and child should behave themselves but half as madly about the things of this world, would you not send them to Bedlam, or to a physician presently, or bind them and use them as the mad are used? And is it not a pitiful hearing, to hear one that is thus mad for his poor soul, to neglect it still and cast it away, and say he doth it for fear of being mad?

3. But I ask you further, what is there in God, in Christ, in heaven, or in a holy life, that should make a man mad to think of it? Is not God better than your house, and land, and sports? Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26, 28; lxiii. 3; Phil. iii. 7, 8. Is he not a better Friend to you than any you have in the world? And will it make you mad to think of your house, or land, or pleasures? Do not all men

confess that we should love God above all? and if it make you not mad to love your friend, or your riches, or yourself, why should it make you mad to live in the love of God? Tell me, do you think that heaven is a desirable place, and better than this miserable world, or not? If you say no, you bear witness against yourself that you are unfit for heaven who do not love it or desire it, and God will deny you but that which you had no mind of. But if you say yea, then tell me why the hopes of everlasting heavenly joys, and the forethoughts thereof, should make one mad? Alas, man! we have no other cordial against all our calamities in this world but the hopes and forethoughts of the joys of heaven. Take away this, and you kill our comforts! Our hearts would sink and die within us. And do men use to go mad for fear of their felicity, and with delightful thoughts of the only good?

S. All this is true if a man were sure of heaven; but when he must think of hell too, and his fears are greater than his hopes, the case is otherwise.

P. Now you say something; but I pray you consider that it is one thing to think of hell despairingly as those who have little or no hope to escape it: this might make a man mad indeed; but this is not your case. But it is another thing to fear hell, as that which you may most certainly avoid—Is. lv. 1-3, 6, 7; Matt. xi. 28; Rev. xxii. 17; Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 16, 18, 19—and withal attain eternal life, if you will but consent to the offers of that Saviour who will freely save you. No man shall be damned that is truly willing to be saved; to be saved, I say, from sin and hell.

S. I pray you tell me, then, what maketh the

thoughts of the world to come so terrible to us? and what maketh so many that are troubled in conscience to be melancholy, or to live so sad a life?

P. I will tell you what. I have had to do with as many melancholy conscientious persons as any one that I know of in England, and I have found that—

1. With the greater part of them it is some worldly cross which makes them melancholy—2 Cor. vii. 10, 11—and then it turneth to matters of conscience afterwards, when they have a while had the disease. And for the most part it befalleth very few but either weak-spirited tender women, whose brains are so weak and their fancies and passions so strong and violent, that they can bear no trouble nor serious thoughts, but their reason is presently disturbed and borne down; or else some men that by natural distempers of body, either from their parents, or contracted by some disease, are specially inclined to it.

2. And when I have known it befall some few in their first repentance, it hath usually been some very heinous sinners, who have lived so debauchedly in drunkenness, or whoredom, or committed perjury or murder, that conscience did more terrify them than they were able to bear. But this was not from any harm that they apprehended in a godly life, but because they had been so ungodly. This was but the fruit of their former wickedness, and partly God's justice that will not pardon heinous sinners till He hath made them perceive sin is evil, and that they must indeed be beholden to His mercy and to Christ. But usually when God hath broken the hearts of such men by His terrors, He tenderly binds them up with comforts, and maketh

those terrors very profitable to them as long as they live. Oh, how precious is Christ to such! How sweet are the promises of pardon and salvation! How hateful is sin to them all their lives after! But if it should fall out that such a wicked man, repenting, should never recover from his melancholy sadness, it is a thousand times better and more hopeful state than he was in before, when he went on in sin with presumption and delight.

3. And there is another case too common. Every poor repenting sinner is not so happy as to fall into the hands of a wise experienced counsellor to direct him. But some do distract men's minds about different opinions in religion, and talk to a poor sinner for this side, and against that side, or about matters that are past their understandings: and some do not clearly and fully open the nature of the covenant of grace, which giveth Christ and life to all who truly consent, nor seek sufficiently, by opening the riches of grace and glory, to win men's hearts or love to God; but bend themselves much more to raise men's fears, and tell them more of what they deserve and what they are in danger of, if they repent not, than of what they shall enjoy with God through Christ when they come home. The first must in its time and place be done; but the latter is the great work that must save the souls. Tit. iii 3-5. Rom. v. 5. 1 Pet. i. 8, 9. Read Luke xv. John v. 42. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Eph. vi. 24. Rom viii. 28. 1 Cor. ii. 9. James i. 12, and ii. 5. For man is not converted and sanctified indeed by any change that is made by fear alone, till love come in and win his heart and repair his nature.

S. You have said so much as doth convince me that I must not for fear of the trouble cast away the

thoughts of my soul and eternity. But truly, sir, I have thought of these things so little that I am but puzzled and lost, and know not what to do. And therefore you must help to guide my thoughts, or I can do nothing with them.

P. You have now hinted yourself another cause that so many are puzzled about religion, and turn it to a melancholy life. When a sinner hath lived ignorantly, carelessly, and sinfully all his days, and cometh at last by the mercy of God to see his misery, it cannot be expected that he should presently be acquainted with all those great mysterious things which he never did seriously mind before: and so is like a man that hath a way to go that he never went, and a book to learn that he never learnt before. And all young scholars do find the easiest lessons hard till they have time to be acquainted with them. They are like a man bred and born in a dungeon, where he had only candle-light, who when he first cometh into the open world and seeth the sun, is astonished at the change, but must have time before (by all that light) he can be acquainted with all the things and persons which he never before saw. Long ignorance will not be cured in a day—John iii. 4, 6, 8. Heb. v. 11-14. Acts viii. 30, 31. And darkness naturally feedeth fears. But time and patience in the light will overcome them.

But, to answer your desire I will direct your thoughts: and I think that now the next thing you have to think on is to look into your heart and look back upon your life, and come to a clear resolution of this question, Whether you are yet a truly converted sinner, and are forgiven and reconciled to God or not, and whether you are yet in the way to heaven or not? I pray you tell me now what you think of·

yourself. If you die this night in the case you are now in, do you think you shall be saved or not?

S. God knows; I told you that I do not know; but I hope well; for no man must despair.

P. To despair of ever being converted and saved is one thing; that you must not do: and to know that a man is not yet converted, and to despair of being saved without conversion, is another thing; that is your duty, if you are yet unrenewed. But as for your hoping well, I must tell you that there is a hope of God's giving, and there is a hope of our own and of the devil's making; and you must not think that God will make good the devil's word—1 Cor. vi. 9. Gal. vi. 7. 1 Cor. iii. 18. Eph. v. 6. 1 John i. 8. Jam. i. 22, 25, nor our word, but only His own word. To a repenting believer, God promiseth forgiveness and salvation, and such a one must hope for it, and God will never disappoint his hopes; but to unbelievers, ungodly impenitent persons, the devil and their own deceitful hearts only do promise forgiveness and salvation. And they that promise it must perform it if they can, for God will not. Do you think that God hath promised that all men shall be saved anywhere in His word?

S. No, I dare not say so.

P. Do you think then if all men shall hope to be saved that this would save them ever the more?

S. No: but yet there is some comfort in hoping well.

P. But how little a while will deceitful comfort last! Do you know that there are some men whom God hath told us that He will not save? As, "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish," Luke xiii. 3, 5. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of

heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," Rom. viii. 13. The text is plain; you cannot deny it. Tell me, then, if any one of these shall hope to be saved, as he is, while God says this cannot be, is such a hope a good hope? Is not this to hope that God's word is false? And should a man hope that God will lie? or will God go contrary to His word?

S. But may we not hope that God will be better than His word? There is no harm in that.

P. That which you call better is not better, but worse. The king hath made laws for the hanging of murderers. If he should pardon them all, they would call it better to them; but all good subjects and honest men would call it worse. For no man could have any security for his life; for every one that had a mind to take his money, or that hated him, would kill him if he could. And where then were justice? What is the law made for, but to be the rule of the subject's life, and of the judge's sentence, and to tell men what they must expect? And if it be not fulfilled it is vain and deceitful, and showeth that the law-maker either had not wisdom enough to make it well or had not power enough to execute it. A benefactor or friend, indeed, may give more than he hath promised, if he see cause; but a righteous governor must rule according to his laws—Job viii. 3, Psa. lxxxix. 14, Heb. xii. 28, 29—or else he deceiveth men by them; which is not to be imputed to God. At least he will not lie—Tit. i. 2, Heb. vi. 18, Rom. iii. 4, 1 John v. 10—and falsify His word.

S. But for all that the king may pardon an offender.

P. That is because weak man can make no law so

perfect but in practice it will be sometimes necessary to depart from it. But it is not so with God. And a righteous king will never pardon crimes but in some rare extraordinary case, which will not injure his subjects nor cause his laws to be despised. And this is no comfort to all the rest of the malefactors.

But I doubt you do not understand that God did at first make a perfect law—Rom. iii. 21, &c., and Rom. v.—throughout, which forbad all sin on pain of death: and man did break this law, and we all still break it from day to day by every sin; and God being merciful hath given us a Saviour, and by Him the forgiveness of all our sins. And now bethink you whether it is not foolishness for any to say, I hope God will forgive me and be better than His word. He hath already forgiven you, if you repent and turn to Him; but if you will not, it is impudence for a man at the same time to refuse forgiveness, and yet to hope for it; to despise mercy, and say, I hope for mercy.

What if the king made an act to pardon rebels, forgiving them all on condition they will thankfully take his pardon, and lay down their rebellious arms, were it not impudent in them to continue in arms and refuse these conditions, and yet say, We hope the king will pardon us?

S. I understand these things better than I did; but I can hardly digest it that you thus seem to drive men to despair.

P. You greatly mistake: I am driving you from despair. There is no hope of the salvation of a sinner that continueth unconverted. Flatter not yourself with foolish hopes of the devil's making. As sure as God's word is true, everlasting despair in hell is the portion of all that die unconverted and

unsanctified. They will then cry out forever; All our hope is past and gone—Job viii. 13-14; xi. 20; xxvii. 8; Prov. xi. 7; xiv. 32; Isa. lvii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 3, 21; iii. 15; 1 John iii. 3. We had once hope of mercy, but we refused it, and now there is no hope. This thought, that there is no more hope, will tear the sinner's heart forever. This is the state that I would keep you from. And do I not then seek to keep you from despair?

Suppose you met a man riding post toward York, and thinketh verily he is in the way to London, and tells you I ride for life, and must be at London at night: you tell him that he must turn back again then, for he is going the quite contrary way, and the further he goeth the further he hath to go back again: he answereth you, Alas, I hope I have not lost all this time and travail; I hope I may come this way to London. Will not you tell him that his hopes will deceive him; there is no hope of coming to London that way, but he must needs turn back? And if he answer you, You would drive me to despair; I will hope well, and go on. What would you say to this man? Would you not take him for a fool, and tell him, If you will not believe me, ask somebody else, and know better before you go on any further.

So say I to you, if you are out of the way to heaven you must despair of ever coming thither till you turn—Luke xiii. 3-5—but that is not to despair of conversion and salvation, but despair of being saved in the devil's way, that you may be saved in God's way, and not despair for evermore. Changing false hopes for sound hopes is not to cast away all hope. There is nothing more hindereth men from repenting and being saved than hoping to be saved without true repentance: for who will ever turn to

God that still hopeth to be saved in the worldly ungodly way that he is in? James iii. 4; Ezek. xxxiii. 9, 11, 99; xviii. 21, 30, 32; xiv. 6. Who will turn back again that hopeth he is right and safe already? Tell me, I pray you, must not every wise man have some ground and reason for his hope? And should a man's soul and everlasting state be ventured upon unsound and uncertain hopes?

S. No, if we can have better.

P. Tell me freely, then, what are the grounds and reasons of your hopes? Heaven is not for all men. What have you to show that will truly prove your title to it?

S. I ground my hope on the great mercy of God.

P. But God's mercy saveth none but by conversion: it is the refusing and abusing of mercy that condemneth men. The question is, Whether this mercy will save you?

S. I place my hope in Jesus Christ, who is my Saviour.

P. I say as before, Christ saveth not all men. What hopes have you that he will save you more than others?

S. Is it not said that He is the Saviour of all men, and that He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world?

P. That is because that saving is His office, for which he is all sufficient—John iii. 16, 2 Cor. v. 19-20—and by His sacrifice He hath pardoned all the world on condition that they believe and turn to God. But till they believe and repent they are not actually pardoned. He may be the physician of all the city or hospital who undertaketh to cure all in the city or hospital that will trust him, and take his

remedies; and yet all may die that will not trust him, and be ruled by him.

S. But I do believe in Christ; and believers are forgiven.

P. If you truly believe, you have good reasons for your hopes; but I am loth you should be mistaken in so great a business. I must first tell you, therefore, what true believing is; every true believer doth at once believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. And he believeth all God's word to be true, and he heartily consenteth that God be his only God, and that Christ be his only Saviour, and the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier, and he trusteth himself wholly to God alone for happiness, and for justification, and sanctification, and salvation. Do you do this?

S. I hope I do: I believe in God, and trust Him.

P. Let us a little consider all the parts of faith, and try whether you thus believe or not.

1. Do you truly believe that without regeneration, repentance, conversion, and holiness, none can be saved and see God? John iii. 3, 6; Luke xiii. 3, 5; Matt. xviii. 3; Heb. xii. 14. And that, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His?" Rom. viii. 9. If you do not, you believe not the word of God.

2. Do you take the love of God and the heavenly glory to be your only happiness—Ps. lxxiii. 25; lxiii. 3; iv. 6, 7—and trust to nothing in this world, neither health, life, wealth, or pleasure, for your daily comfort and greatest content?

3. Do you desire and trust that Christ will save you from all your sins, and will teach you all the will of God? and that He will sanctify you by the Holy Ghost, that you may live a holy and heavenly

life in the love of God—Rom. viii. 1, 6–8, 13; Heb. xi. 6; 2 Tim. ii. 4; 1 Thes. iv. 1; Is. lvi. 4; Col. i. 10—and may forsake not only lust, and wantonness, and gluttony, and drunkenness, and pride, and ambition, and deceit, and covetousness, but also mortify all fleshly desires, and destroy all your own will, which is against the will of God, and bring you up to the greatest holiness?

S. You put me hard to it now. I know not what to say to this.

P. You may know whether you believe and trust in God and Christ or not, if you will but consider these three things. 1. What you must believe and trust Him for; 2. What word of His it is that you believe; 3. What are the effects which are always brought forth by a serious faith. And,

1. You must trust in God for that which He hath promised to give; and you must take all together, or else it is not trusting God. As you trust a physician to cure you, and trust a schoolmaster to teach you, and trust a lawyer to counsel you in his way—and so you trust every man in his own undertaken work—so must you trust God to be your only everlasting joy, and better to you than all the world, and to be the lawgiver and ruler of your life; and you must trust Christ to justify you and save you from your sins—Acts xxvi. 18; Tit. ii. 14—and you must trust the Holy Ghost to kill your sins, and to illuminate, sanctify, and quicken you, and by degrees to make you perfectly holy. For these are the things that God is to be trusted for. But if any should trust God to save them from hell, and not from sin, or from the guilt of sin and not from the power of it, or to let them keep their fleshly lusts while they live, and then to give them

heaven at death, this is not to trust God, but to abuse Him, nor to trust His mercy, but to refuse it. How doth he trust in Christ to save him who is not willing to be saved by Him? And he that will not be saved from his sin, will not be saved by Christ. And how can he trust the Holy Ghost to sanctify him who is not willing to be sanctified, but thinketh a holy life to be an intolerable toil and misery?

2. To believe God is to believe His word. And what word of God have you to believe but that He will save converted believers, and condemn all ungodly unbelievers? If now you will believe that God will save any unconverted ungodly sinners, this is to believe the devil and yourselves, and not God; for God never said any such word in all the Bible, but protesteth the contrary. And what a self-deceit is it to hope to be saved for believing a lie and fathering it upon God! And what blasphemy is it to call it believing God when you believe the devil that contradicteth Him!

3. Believing and trusting will be seen in their effects. Is it possible for a man truly to believe that he shall have a life of joy in heaven for ever if he will turn from the flesh and the world to God, and value and seek heaven more than earth, and yet not do it, but be a carnal worldling still? Is it possible truly to believe that the wicked shall be turned into hell—Ps. ix. 17—and yet to go on still in wickedness?

If you were a beggar or a slave in England, and the king should promise you a kingdom in the Indies if you will but trust yourself in the ship with his own son, who undertaketh to bring you thither, I pray you tell me, now, what is the meaning of this trusting his son, and how may it appear whether

you trust the king's promise and his son's conduct or not? If you trust him, you will pack up and be gone; you will leave your own country and all that is in it, and on shipboard you will go, and venture all that you have in the voyage, in hope of the kingdom which is promised you. Luke xviii. 22, 23; xiv. 26, 33; Matt. xiii. 45, 46. But if you fear that the king deceiveth you, or that his son wanteth either skill, or will, or power to bring you to the promised place, and that the ship is unsafe, or the waves and tempests like to drown you, then you will stay at home and will not venture. So when God offereth you a heavenly kingdom, if so be you will in heart forsake the world and all its pomp and pleasures, and all the sinful desires of the flesh. If now you trust this promise of God, you will forsake all and follow a crucified Saviour as a cross-bearer; you will take shipping with Christ and His servants, and let go all in hope of heaven. But if you do not forsake all (in heart) and follow Him, resolving to take heaven instead of all, you do not trust Him, whatever you may pretend.

S. I cannot deny but what you say is the plain truth.

P. Suppose that you were sick, and only one physician could cure you, and he offereth to do it freely if you trust him, that is, will trust your life to his skill and care; and some give out that he is but a deceiver and not to be trusted, and others tell you that he never failed any that he undertook. If you trust him now, you will commit yourself wholly to his care, and follow his counsel, and take his medicines, and forsake all others; but if you distrust him you will neglect him. And if any should say, I trust this physician with my life, and yet

stay at home and never come near him nor take any of his counsel, or at least none of his medicines, would you not count him mad that looked to be cured by such a trust?

S. I confess this helpeth me better to understand what trusting in God and believing in Christ is: I doubt many say they trust Him, that keep their sins and hold fast the world—Tit. i. 16—and never dreamt of forsaking all for the hopes of heaven.

But I thought, sir, that this command of forsaking all and taking up our cross had been spoken only to such as lived in times of persecution, when they must deny Christ or die, and not to us who live where Christianity is professed. God forbid that none should be saved but martyrs.

P. But do you not find that it is the very covenant and common law of Christ, imposed on all that will be saved, that they must deny themselves and forsake all and take up the cross and follow Him, or else they cannot be His disciple? Matt. x. 37, &c.; Luke xiv. 25–33; xviii. 21, 22, &c. But it is well that you confess that you must forsake life and all for Christ rather than deny Him. Rom. viii. 16–18; 2 Tim. ii. 12; Matt. x. 33; xvi. 24–26; Luke xii. 9. For if a man must do this actually in persecution, then he must do it before in affection and resolution. Can you die for Christ, then, unless your heart be prepared for it now? Can you, then, leave all this world for God and heaven unless you beforehand love God and heaven better than all the world, and resolve to forsake it when you are called to do it?

S. No man is likely to do that which his heart is not disposed to before, and which he is not purposed to do.

P. Why, then, you see, the case is plain that every one that will be Christ's disciple must forsake the world in heart and resolution, and be a martyr in true preparation and disposition, though no one must cast away his estate or life, nor be a martyr by suffering till God call him to it. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15.

By this time you may perceive, it you are willing, whether your faith in Christ and trust in God have been true or false. And now tell me, what else you have to prove that you are a justified Christian, and that your hope of salvation is built on God?

S. My next proof is, that I repent of my sins: and God hath promised to forgive them that repent.

P. Repentance is a good evidence as well as faith: but here also you must take heed of that which is counterfeit, and therefore you must be sure to understand well what true repentance is.

S. Repentance is to be sorry for my sins when I have committed them, and to wish I had never done them.

P. If you know repentance no better than so, you may be undone by the mistake. True repentance is the same with true conversion—Matt. xviii. 3; 1 Cor. vi. 11; 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11; Tit. iii. 3, 5—and it is such a settled change of the mind, will, and life from fleshly, worldly, and ungodly, to spiritual, heavenly, and holy, as maketh us hate all the sin which we loved, and heartily love a holy life—Rom. vii. 22—and all those duties to God and man which before our hearts were set against. And this change is so firmly rooted in us as that it is become as a new nature to us—2 Cor. v. 17—so that all the

same temptations which before prevailed with us would not draw us to the same sins again, nor turn us from a holy life, if we were exposed to them as we were.

S. There is a great deal in this: I pray you open it to me more fully in the particulars.

P. By this you may see what goeth to make up true repentance, and how many sorts of repentance are counterfeit.

1. True repentance is a change of the whole soul —Acts xxvi. 18; Rom. viii. 30—the judgment, the will, and the life, and not of any one of these alone. It is counterfeit repentance which changeth only a man's opinion, and not his heart and his conversation. And it is counterfeit repentance when men pretend that their wills are changed, and they are willing to live a godly life, when they do it not, and their lives are not changed.

2. True repentance doth not only turn a man's heart and life from this or that particular sin but from a fleshly, worldly, and ungodly state—John iii. 6; 1 John ii. 15; Rom. viii. 1, 8, 13; xiii. 12–14—so he that before did seek above all to fulfil the desires of his flesh and to prosper in the world, doth now strive as hard to kill those desires as he did to satisfy them; and now taketh the world for vanity and vexation, and turneth it out of his heart. It is counterfeit repentance which reformeth only some open shameful sin, as drunkenness, prodigality, fornication, deceiving, or the like, and still keepeth up a worldly mind, and the pleasing of the flesh in a cleanlier way. No one sin is rightly killed, till the love of every sin be killed.

3. True repentance is a turning to God, and setting of our hearts and hopes on heaven, Phil. iii.

18—20; Col. iii. 1, 3—5; Matt. vi. 21, 33 so that we now love holiness and seek God's kingdom above this world. It is counterfeit repentance, or mere melancholy, when men by affliction or conviction cry out of the vanity of this world, and set not their hearts upon a better, and seek not after the heavenly felicity.

4. True repentance is a settled and an effectual change: it maketh a man love that which is good as if it were now natural to him, Psa. i. 2, 3; cxix. &c.; xix. 7—9; and not only to do some good for fear, which he had rather leave undone, nor only to forbear some sins for fear, which he had rather he might keep. And therefore the very heart and love being changed, temptations even the same that before prevailed, would not now prevail again, if he were under them. It is but a counterfeit repentance when men are sorry for sinning, but amend not; or are sorry to-day, and sin again to-morrow, and that by such gross and wilful sin, which they might forsake if they were truly willing, Matt. vii. 21—23; 2 Tim. ii. 19. By this time then you may try whether you have repented indeed as you supposed.

S. But Christ bids us to forgive those that seven times in a day trespass, and seven times in a day return and say they repent, Luke xvii. 4. And will not God then do so?

P. 1. Christ speaketh of true repentance, as far as we can judge, and not of saying, I repent, when it is an apparent lie or mockery. 2. And He speaketh of such trespasses, the oft committing of which is consistent with true repentance. For instance, it is possible that a man may seven times a day think a vain thought, or speak a vain word, or

if he pray seven times a day, he may have every time some coldness or imperfections in his prayers; and such like infirmities oft returning may stand with true repentance, because the sinner would fain overcome them if he could. And so if a man often wrong you through infirmity, and oft repent, you must forgive him. But tell me truly, if one of your own servants or children should seven times a day, or but once a week, or once a month, spit in your face, and beat and buffet you, or wound you, and set your house on fire, and as oft come and say: I repent of it—would you take this for true repentance, or think that this is it that Christ here meant? Or if your servant should every night come to you and say, Master, I have done no work to-day, but I repent, I wish I had done it; and so hold on from day to day, would you take this for repentance? Do you think it possible for an ungodly, wordly, fleshly man, to repent truly of such a life to-day, and turn to it again to-morrow, and so on? It cannot be. A man may repent of an angry look, or a vain word to-day, and through infirmity commit the same to-morrow: but a man cannot repent of an ungodly, sensual life, and turn to it again to-morrow.

I do not think that there is one wicked man of many but when he hath been guilty of fornication, drunkenness, or any such sin of sensual pleasure, doth repent of it when the pleasure is gone, and wisheth that he had not done it, when yet he goeth on, and is a lover of such beastly pleasure more than of God: for there needeth no saving grace to such a kind of repentance: sense and experience may serve the turn. For when the pleasure of the sin is gone it is nothing, and therefore is no matter for the sinner's love; unless it be the fanciful remembrance

of it, which is another thing. But it is the future pleasure which is still desired. When the drunkard is sick, or findeth the next day the sweetness is all gone, and nothing left but shame or poverty, or a wounded conscience, no thanks to him to say, I am sorry, and wish I had been sober: but still he loveth the sin, and will not leave it, and therefore hath no true change of heart and life, which is the true repentance. And now consider well what I have said, and judge yourself whether you have ever truly repented of a worldly, a fleshly, and an unholy heart and life.

S. You put me so hard to it that I know not what to say; I know not well what to think of myself. And therefore, sir, as you have examined my case, I shall entreat you to help me to pass a right judgment of it; for you are wiser in these things than I; and though the patient feel the pains, yet the physician can better judge of the cause, and nature, and danger of the disease.

P. You say well: but then the patient must tell what he feeleth, and you must answer me these few questions.

1. Have your soul and everlasting state, had your more deep and serious thoughts and regard, Matt. vi. 24, 25. than your body, and your worldly welfare?

S. I cannot say so, though I have often thought of it.

P. 2. Do you verily believe that your sins are so great as that if God should condemn you to hell, Rom. vi. 23. iii. 23. Eph. ii. 3. Rom. vii. 24. viii. 1. 1 Thess. i. 10. he should do no worse to you than you deserve?

S. I know you would not have me lie. I have

been taught indeed that so it is: but my heart never perceived my sins to be so great as to deserve hell: I should think it unjust to be so used, as I would not use my greatest enemy.

P. 3. Have you not only heard, but believed, and perceived that you have as much need of Christ to be your saviour, as a condemned malefactor hath of a pardon? and is Christ more precious to you than all the riches of the world, Phil. iii. 7--9. 1 Pet. ii. 4. 6, 7. his ransom and mediation being your hope, and his grace your earnest desire?

S. I know that we cannot be saved without Christ; but I cannot say that I have so much desired him.

P. 4. Have you perceived at the heart that the love and favour of God is far better than all the treasures and places of this world? Matt. vi. 20, 21; Col. iii. 1, 3, 4, &c.; Psa. lxxiii, 25; lxiii. 3; Phil. iii 20, 21; Matt. vi. 33; John vi. 27; 2 Pet. i. 10; iii. 11, 12. And do you verily believe that all the blessed shall see His glory in heaven, and perfectly love and praise and serve Him, and be filled with perfect joy forever, in this blessed sight and love of God? And do you set more by the hope of this heavenly glory, than by your life and all this world? And do you prefer heaven before earth, in your esteem, your desire, and heartiest labour and diligence to make it sure?

S. I would I could say so; I doubt there are but few that reach so high as that.

P. 5. Have you truly believed that all that will come to heaven must be a regenerate, sanctified people, in mind, and will, and life—2 Cor. v. 19, 20; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Rom. viii. 9; Gal. v. 17--21; Acts iii. 22; vii. 37; Matt. 28, 29; Luke xix. 27;

Heb. xii. 14—and that this must be done by the Holy Ghost? And have you earnestly desired that He would sanctify you thoroughly? and kill all your sins and make you fervently in love with God, and all that is good and fully obedient to His will? and have you given up yourself to Jesus Christ in a well-considered, resolved covenant, consenting to be taught and governed by Him, and willing to imitate Him and to receive His Spirit?

S. I cannot say so; though I desire to amend.

P. 6. Do you feel the evil and hatefulness of a worldly, carnal, unrenewed heart, and of an unholy life?—Rom. vii. 14, 24; Ezek. vi. 9; xx. 43; xxxvi. 31. Yea, of your want of faith and love to God, as well as of outward shameful sins? And are these sins of heart and practice the greatest trouble and burden to you in the world?

S. I would it were so, but I do not find it so.

P. 7. Can you truly say that you live not wilfully in any known gross sin?—1 John iii. 4, 8, 9; Psa. v. 5; Rom. vii. 17, 24; Luke xiv. 26—and that you have no sin—no, not the least known infirmity—which you had not rather leave than keep; and that you had rather be perfectly holy (in perfect knowledge, love and obedience) than to have all the riches and pleasures and honours of this world?

S. I should say what was not true if I said so.

P. 8. Can you truly say that when a temptation cometh to your most beloved sin, God's authority which forbiddeth it is more powerful to keep you from it than the temptation and your lust to draw you to it?—Gen. xxxiii. 9; Rom. xii. 21; 2 Pet. ii. 19, 20; 1 John v. 4 5; Rev. ii. 7, 11, &c.

S. I would it were; I should then sin less.

P. 9. Are you truly willing to wait on God to

obtain His grace—Psa. i. 1, 2 ; Matt. vii. 13 ; Prov. ii. 1—4 ; Luke x. 42—in the constant use of hearing, prayer, meditation, and the company and counsel of the godly, even in the strictest means which God appointeth you to use for your salvation ?

S. I think they are happy that can do so ; but I cannot.

P. 10. Can you truly say that you are at a point with all this world—Luke xiv. 26, 33 ; Matt. x. 38, 39 ; Luke xviii. 22, 23—resolved to let go estate, honour, liberty and life rather than to let go your faith and obedience, or by wilful sin to turn from God ?

S. I know I should do so ; but I am not come to that.

P. By all these answers set together you have enabled me how to judge of your condition. If all this be so as you have answered, I must needs tell you, that I think that you are yet unconverted and unjustified, and under the guilt and power of your sins, even in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. And that if you should die as you are, without conversion, you are lost for ever. You must be made a new creature, or you are undone. I know this judgment may possibly seem harsh, and be displeasing to you ; but it is foolish to flatter our friends or ourselves, when we stand so near the world of light.

But withal I tell you, 1. That your case is not past remedy ; and that you may be saved from it, whenever you are truly willing. 2. And that you are not so far from grace and recovery as many hardened sinners are. For I perceive that you deal openly, and are not so desperately set against conviction and conversion as too many are.

S. I thank you for dealing plainly with me ; but what makes you judge so hardly of my case ?

P. Out of your own mouth I pass my judgment ; for you confess that it is not yet with you, as it is with all that have the spirit of Christ. And if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9.

And I will here take the boldness to add some observations of my own, which have long made me fear that yet you have not the spirit of Christ, nor true repentance unto life. For, I have never perceived that you did seriously mind the case of your soul. One might be often in your company, and hear nothing but of common worldly things, which may be talked of in due time and measure : not a word of heaven, nor that savored of any care of your salvation. And surely one cannot truly believe and mind and regard so great a matter as life everlasting, and never show it, by any serious inquiries or discourse, Psa. xxxvii. 30—32.

S. I confess I never made the saving of my soul so much of my care, and so serious a business as you talk of ; nor hath my heart been so sensible of the need that I have of Christ, or of the greatness of God's love and mercy to sinners in our redemption ; nor have I had such believing and serious thoughts of the life to come, as to make it seem more desirable to me than this world ; but yet I thought that all being sinners, and God being merciful, I might be saved if I believed in Christ, and put my trust in him alone. But, now you have made me better to understand what it is to believe and trust in Christ, I perceive that I did not indeed believe and trust in him when I thought I had.

P. I pray you tell me: do you not think there are such sins as presumption, carnal security, false believing, and false hope whereby the devil undoeth souls?

S. Yes; I have heard preachers often say so.

P. What do you think presumption is?

S. Presuming or thinking that God doth accept us, and we are in a state of grace, when it is not so, John viii. 39, 41, 44, ix. 40.

P. What do you think carnal security is?

S. To be careless about the state of our souls, when our danger calleth for our greatest care, Matt. xxiv. 39. 1 Thess. v. 3.

P. What is false believing?

S. To believe ourselves, or bad men, or the devil against God, or instead of God, Matt. xxiv. 23, 26; 1 John iv. 1; or to believe that God hath promised that which he hath not promised; or to trust that Christ will give heaven to such as he hath told us shall not have it.

P. And what is false hope?

S. To hope for heaven or mercy without any just ground, upon terms that God never promised to give it on, or hath plainly said, he will not give it. Prov. xi. 7.

P. You have answered very well and truly. And do you not think that all these have been your sins?

S. I am now afraid so: but I am loth to think that it is so bad with me; and therefore I would fain hope still that it is better: but if it should be so, I pray you tell me, what would you yet advise me to do?

P. God knoweth, I have no desire to trouble you, nor to put you into any needless fears, much less to drive you into despair; nor would I have

you conclude that your state is bad, upon my word alone. But I will here cite you some texts of scripture, by which you may certainly judge yourself; and I will entreat you when you come home to bestow a few hours in secret as in God's presence, in the true and impartial examination of yourself by them, and tell me when I next see you how you find the ease yourself.

S. But if I do find it bad, I pray you tell me now what I must do to be pardoned and saved.

P. I will now only tell you these generals, 1. That you must well consider how bad and sad an unconverted man's condition is, that you may not delay to seek for mercy, and to come out of such a miserable state. 2. That yet you need not despair, or be discouraged; for Christ is a sufficient Saviour and remedy.

And for the first, believe it, till you repent and are converted, you are destitute of the holy image of God, and have the image of the devil in ignorance, unbelief, and averseness or enmity to God and holiness, in pride, sensuality, worldliness, disobedience, and carnal selfishness. Your heart is against the holy laws and ways of God. You have a fleshly will and concupiscence of your own, which is your idol, and the great rebel against God, which will still be striving against his will, and will draw you to be still pleasing it, though it displease God. You will be a slave to the devil, by your slavery to this fleshly mind and appetite; and you will spend your little time in the world in pleasing that flesh, if God convert you not, Gal. v. 19—24, Rom. viii. 5—9, Eph. ii. 1—3, &c., Mark iv. 12. You will never truly love God and heaven, nor make him your end, nor take him for your God; and so you

will live in enmity and rebellion against him. You are yet unreconciled, unpardoned, unjustified, unsanctified. All your sins that ever you committed are yet upon you in their guilt. And, in a word, (pardon my plain dealing,) if you die as you are, you will be certainly damned; and as you have departed from God's grace, he will judge you to depart forever from his glory also. And it will go much the worse with you in hell, because that you might have had the grace of a Redeemer, and you refused Christ, and resisted his Spirit, and neglected his great salvation. So that to deal freely with you, I would not be in your case one day for all the riches in the world. For you have no assurance of your life a minute; and you are certain it cannot be long. And you are still in the power of that God whom you offend. And if you thus die before a true and sound conversion, you are lost for ever; and all your time, your mercies, your comforts, and your hopes, are gone for ever, past all remedy. This is as sure the state of every unregenerate, unholy, impenitent sinner, as the word of God is true, John iii. 3, 5, Heb. xii. 14. And therefore as you love yourself, and as ever you care what becomes of your soul, when it must shortly leave your body, go presently try, and thoroughly try whether you are a penitent regenerate person or not.

S. Alas, sir, I know not how to do it; for I have left my soul hitherto carelessly to a venture, thinking that this had been trusting Christ with it, and now I am unskilful in such matters, and know not how to examine myself. Therefore I pray you give me your directions.

P. With all my heart, if you will but promise

me to do your best; will you set yourself some time apart for the business, and do it as a man would cast up an account, with your most serious thoughts? And will you examine yourself as you would do another man, with an unfeigned willingness to know the truth, be it better or be it worse?

S. Alas, what good will it do me to flatter and deceive myself, when God knoweth all, and will not be deceived? I desire to know what case I am in, that I may know what course to take hereafter.

P. Indeed, till you know that you know not well whether comfort or sorrow best become you, nor whether the promises or threatenings should be first applied by you, nor how well to use any text you read or sermon you hear. And methinks that a mere uncertainty what shall become of you when you die, and whether you shall be in heaven or hell for ever, should mar your mirth, and make you sleep with little quietness, till at least you had done your best to make your calling and election sure, and got some good well grounded hopes.

I will put you to no longer work than is necessary. 1. Take the scriptures, especially these texts here transcribed, and set them before you, and well consider them as the word of God. 2. Fall down on your knees, and earnestly beg God's help and mercy, to convince you, and show you the truth of your condition. 3. Look back upon all your life, and look into the inwards of your soul, and let conscience compare your heart and life with the word of God, and urge it to speak plainly, and to judge you truly as you are. 4. Do not only try and judge yourself by some few actions which have been extraordinary with you; but by the main design, and scope and tenour of your heart and life.

For there is some good in the worst men, and some evil in the best; and if you will judge of a good man by his worst actions, or of a bad man by his best, you will be unrighteous and misjudge them. Simon Magus when he was professing his faith at his baptism, seemed better than Simon Peter, when he was denying Christ. And judge not your heart by some good thoughts, or some bad thoughts, which have been rare; but judge it by that which hath had your chief esteem, your chief love or choice, and been the main design which you have driven on, and had your chiefest care and diligence in seeking it. Be sure to find out what it is, whether God or the flesh, that hath been uppermost, that hath had your heart and life, and been that to which the other had stooped and subserved. These are all the directions that I will trouble you with, saving that I would have you, 5. To follow on the search till you know the truth, and what you cannot do at once, come to it again till you are resolved; and come and tell me how you have found the case to stand with you: and the Lord assist you.

The texts which I set before you are these:

"Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John iii. 5, 6.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light,

because their deeds were ever evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God," John iii. 16, 18—21.

"Go and teach," or disciple, "all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. So Mark xvi. 16.

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. xviii. 3.

"To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among which are sanctified, by faith that is in me," Acts xxvi. 18.

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3, 5.

"There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye

through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness to," or with, "our Spirit, that we are the children of God," Rom. viii. 1, 5—9, 13—16.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are adulteries, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof," Gal. v. 19, 24.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," Gal. iv. 14.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17.

"Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. So Eph. v. 3—11.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 11-14.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Luke xvi. 13.

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," 1 John v. 4, 5.

"The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," 2 Tim. ii. 19.

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death," 1 John iii. 10, 14.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night," Psa. i. 1, 2.

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts," or wills, "thereof," Rom. xiii. 13, 14.

"Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins," Matt. i. 21.

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also," (that is, love them not so much less than me, that he can cast them by as we do things hated, when they stand against me,) "he cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out," Rev. iii. 12.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 7, 8.

"There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous Judge, shall give me: and to all them that love his appearing," 2 Tim. iv. 8. Read Matt. xxv.

THE SECOND CONFERENCE.

OF THE CONVERSION OF A SINNER.

PAUL. Well, neighbour; have you examined yourself by the word of God, since I saw you, as I directed you?

SAUL. I have done what I can in it.

P. And what do you now think of your case, upon trial?

S. I think it is much worse than I had supposed it was; and as bad as you feared. When I first read the promises to all that believe in Christ, I was ready again to hope that I was safe: but when I read further, I found that it was as you had told me; and that I had none of Christ's Spirit, and therefore am none of his; and that I am not a penitent convert, and am not in a state in which I should be content to die. But I now beseech you, sir, as you pity a poor sinner, tell me what I must do to be saved? Acts ii. 37, xvi. 30.

P. Are you willing and resolved to do it if I tell it you, and prove it to you fully by the word of God?

S. By the grace of God I am resolved to do it, be it what it will: for I know it cannot be so bad as sin and hell.

P. You say well, I will first tell you this again in the general:—

1. That your case is not past remedy, but a full and sufficient salvation is purchased, and offered in

the gospel to you as well as to any others, Matt. xi. 28.

2. That Christ and his grace is this remedy; and that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, 1 John v. 11, 12. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life, but remaineth in his guilt and sin.

3. That Christ having already made himself a sufficient sacrifice for sins, and merited our reconciliation, pardon, and salvation, to be given in his way, hath made a covenant of grace with sinful man, by the promise of which he forgiveth us all our sins, and giveth us right to everlasting life, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, John iii. 16.

4. That Christ's way of saving men from sin is by sending his ministry and word to call them, Acts xxvi. 16—18. Rom. x. 8—10, 14, 15, and giving his Spirit within to sanctify them, Rom. viii. 9. And this Spirit is Christ's Advocate to plead his cause, and do his work, and prepare us by holiness for the heavenly glory.

5, That all the condition required of you that you may have all these blessings of the covenant of grace, is but sincerely to believe and consent, and give up yourself in covenant to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and continue true to the covenant which you make, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Mark xvi. 16. Rev. xxii. 17.

Read over these five points well, and consider them: and then tell me whether this be not glad tidings to an undone miserable sinner? Have you read them over?

S. I have read them: and I perceive that they are glad tidings of hope indeed. But truly, sir, I have heard the gospel so carelessly, that I do not

thoroughly understand these things; and therefore entreat you to explain them to me more fully and plainly.

[P. The first thing in religion is to have a right knowledge of God and ourselves, and of our relation to him. Now in this matter scripture is our only teacher, and there we find the following truths which we must receive.]

1. That there is only one God in three Persons, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, who is an infinite, eternal, perfect Spirit; all powerful, wise, and good; of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; the Creator, and therefore the Owner and Ruler of all men.

2. That this God made Adam and Eve in his own image, Gen. i. 27. ii. 16, 17. Eccl. vii. 29. under a perfect law of innocency requiring perfect obedience of them, on pain of death.

3. That they broke this perfect law by wilful sin, Gen. iii. Rom. iii. 23. vi, 23. and thereby fell under the sentence of death, the displeasure of God, the forfeiture of his grace, and of all their happiness.

4. That all of us having our very beings and natures from them, and their successors, derive corruption of nature also from them, and a participation of guilt, Rom. v. 12, 18. Gen. ii. 16, 17. Rom. iii. 9, 19. Eph. ii. 2, 3. Heb. ii. 14. John viii. 44. And these corrupted natures are disposed to all actual sin, by which we should grow much worse, and more miserable.

5. That God of his mercy and wisdom took advantage of man's sin and misery to glorify his grace, and promised man a Redeemer, Gen. iii. 15. John iii. 16. and made a new law or covenant for

his government and salvation, forgiving him all his sins, and promising him salvation, if he believe and trust in God his Saviour, and repent of sin; and live in thankful sincere obedience, though imperfect.

6. In the fulness of time, God sent his Son, his eternal Word made man, to be our Redeemer, Gal. iv. 4 John i. 1—3. 1 John ii. 2. John x 30. 1 Tim. ii. 5. Heb. ii. 14, 15. Luke i. 27, 31. Matt. i. 20, 21. Heb. iv. 15. vii. 26. ix. 26. 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. Luke xxiii 44. 2 Tim. i. 10. Acts i. 9. iii. 21. ii. 36, x 36. Heb. viii. 2. x. 21. John xiv. 2, 3, iii. 16. who was conceived in a virgin by the Holy Ghost, and by perfect obedience fulfilled God's law, and became our example, and conquered all temptations, and gave himself a sacrifice for our sins, in suffering, after a life of humiliation, a cursed shameful death upon a cross; and being buried. he rose again the third day, and having conquered death, aasured us of a resurrection; and after forty days' continuance upon earth, he ascended bodily in the sight of his disciples into heaven; where he is the Teacher, the King, and the Intercessor for the church with God; by whom alone we must come unto the Father; and who prepareth for us the heavenly glory, and us for it.

7. The Holy Ghost in a peculiar manner is given to all that thus truly believe, 1 Cor. xii 12. 13, Rom. viii. 9, Gal. iv. 6, Rom. viii. 16, 26, John iii. 6—8, Eph. ii. 1, 2, Tit. iii. 3, 5, Acts xxvi. 18, Rom. viii. 30, 1 John ii. 15, Gal. v. 17, 24. To dwell and work in them, and regenerate them more fully to the nature and image of God, working in them, 1. A holy liveliness and activity for God;

2. A holy light and knowledge of God ; 3. A holy love and desire after God, and all that by which God is manifested unto man. And they that have not that renewing Spirit of Christ, are none of his ; and by this the temptations of the flesh, the world and the devil must be overcome.

8. At death men's souls are judged particularly, and enter into joy or misery, Luke xxiii. 43, xvi. 22, 26, 2 Cor. v. 18, Phil. i. 23, Acts i. 11, 1 Cor. xv., John v. 22, 29, Matt. xxv., xiii. 41—43. 2 Tim. iv. 8, 18, 2 Thess. i. 8—10, ii. 12, John xvii. 24. And at the end of this world, Christ will come in glory and raise the dead, and judge all the world according to their works. And then all true believers shall be openly justified and glorified with Christ ; where they shall be made perfect in soul and body, and perfectly know, love, praise, and please the most blessed God for evermore, among the blessed saints and angels. But the impenitent and unbelieving shall be for ever deprived of this glory, and suffer in hell everlasting misery, with devils and ungodly men.

These points must all be competently understood by you, or else you cannot understand what repentance, conversion, or christianity is. And you cannot consent to you know not what.

S. Alas ! sir, when shall I ever be able to understand and remember all this ?

[P. You will understand and remember it when God by his Spirit shall open the eyes of your mind, and incline you to receive the truths of his holy word in simplicity and love.

For besides understanding the rule of your duty, and the way of salvation, you must consent to them that they are good, and you must choose and follow

them in practice. The way of salvation I have told you already is that you accept Christ as he is offered to you in the gospel for your only Saviour, the "one Mediator between God and man," for whose "merits we are accounted righteous before God and not for our own works and deservings."

And the rule of your practice is shortly summed up in love; for "faith," the scripture saith, "worketh by love" and love is the fulfilling of the law."]

S. What love is it that you mean?

P. The love of God, the love of yourself, and the love of your neighbor, is the sum of all your duty.

S. This is but reasonable duty, which no man can deny or speak against. And one part of it I shall easily keep, which is to love myself.

P. Alas poor man! have you kept it hitherto? What enemy have you had in all the world comparable to yourself? Hos. xiii. 9. Prov. xxix. 24. viii. 36. All that your enemies could do against you is but as a trifle. What if they slander you, oppress you, imprison you, or otherwise abuse you? Wrong not yourself, and all this cannot hinder your salvation, nor make God love you ever the less, nor make death ever the more terrible; nor will it ever be your sorrow in heaven to think of it. All your enemies in the world, cannot force you to commit one sin, nor make you at all displeasing unto God. But you yourself have committed thousands of sins, and made yourself an enemy to God. Oh the folly of ungodly men! they can hardly forgive another if he do but beat them, or slander them, or impoverish them: and yet they can go on to abuse, undo, and destroy their souls, and run towards hell, and easily forgive themselves all this; yea take it for their benefit, Tit. iii. 2—5, and will

not be restrained, nor persuaded to forbear, nor show any mercy to their own miserable souls, 2 Cor. v. 19 20. I tell you, though the devil hate you, yet all the devils in the world have not done so much against you as you have done against yourself. The devils did but tempt you to sin, but never did nor could compel you: but it is you that have wilfully sinned yourself, and sold your soul, as Esau his birthright, for a morsel, for a pleasant cup or game, or for a lust or filthy pleasure, and for a thing that is worse than nothing.

Was it not you, even you yourself, that forgot your God, neglected your Saviour, resisted the Holy Spirit, refused sanctifying grace, despised heaven, and set more by this vain world? Was it not you yourself that loved not holiness, nor a holy God, nor the holy scriptures, nor holy persons, nor holy thoughts, or words, or ways? that lost your precious time; and omitted almost all your duty, and ran into a multitude of sins? and if the devil studied his worst to hurt you, what could he do more than to tempt you unto sin? If you had been a sworn enemy to yourself, and plotted how to do yourself the greatest mischief, what could you do worse than to sin and run on God's displeasure? Which is the way to the gallows, but by breaking the law, by murder, felony, or the like? and which is the way to hell, but loving sin, and refusing grace? And yet are you a lover of yourself?

S. All this is too true. The Lord knoweth that this hath been my case; I have been my own most hurtful enemy; and done more against myself than all the world hath done; and while I loved myself carnally, I undid myself foolishly. And I understand now that it is not so easy a matter to love one's

own soul aright as I had thought. But he that will not love God, it is pity he should live; for God is all goodness.

P. Alas man! it is far harder to love God truly than yourself, Luke xviii. 22—24. xiv, 26. 33. Rom. viii. 8. I tell you, that your want of love to God is the greatest sin that ever you were guilty of and the very sum of all your sins. And were the true love of God more common, salvation would be more common; for no true lover of God shall be condemned. I know that there is something of God that all men love. They love him as he is the Maker and Maintainer of the world, and of their own lives and bodily prosperity; and as he giveth them food and raiment, and all the mercies which they abuse to gratify their lusts. But they love him not as he is holy, and a righteous Governor, forbidding sin, requiring holiness, hating and punishing the ungodly restraining fleshly lusts, and not forgiving nor saving the impenitent. If you had loved God all this while indeed, would you not have loved his word, and loved to praise him, and call upon his name, and loved what he loveth, and delighted to do his will and please him? did you love God when you broke his laws, and hated holiness, and could not abide an obedient, holy, heavenly life, and loved not to think or talk much of him, nor to call upon him? You may as well say that he loveth the king who openly insulteth him, and rebelleth against him.

As long as you think you have been a lover of God in your sinful state of life, Eph. ii. 1—3. Rom. viii. 6, 7, v. 9, 10, and think it so easy still to love him, you know not God you know not yourself, you know not the need or the nature of true conversion, nor can you repent of this greatest

sin while you know not that you are guilty of it. Do you not know that you have all this while been an enemy to God, and a hater of him?

S. I have been an enemy to myself, but surely nobody can hate God.

P. Where there is enmity, loathing, aversion of mind, and unwillingness, there is hatred. The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be, Rom. viii. 5—7. If there were no enmity between God and man, what need was there of a Mediator or Reconciler? And will you think so ill of the most gracious God, and so well of yourself a naughty sinner, as to think that the enmity is only in God, and not in you? Zech. xi. 8, Eph. iv. 18, 19. Is he an enemy to any man that is not first an enemy to him? He hateth all the workers of iniquity, Psa. v. 5, because they are all enemies to him, and contrary to his holiness as darkness is to light. It is the very case of all ungodly persons, that their hearts are turned away from God to this world, and to the pleasures of the flesh, Phil. iii. 18, 19, Col. i. 21, and being in love with these, they love not that God, nor that holy word, which calls them off, and condemns them for their sinful minds and pleasures, Heb. x. 13, Luke xiv. 27, Isa. i. 24, Psa. xxxvii. 20. Let your conscience speak plainly; Had not the world more of your heart than heaven? Were you not a lover of pleasure more than of God? Were you not a lover of pleasure more than of God? Were not your thoughts, lying down, and rising up, and all the day more forward and ready to think of your worldly and fleshly concernments, than of God? And were not those thoughts more sweet and welcome to you? Was not your heart so

loth and backward to think of God with pleasure, that you never did seriously set yourself one hour together in your life to meditate of him and of the heavenly glory? Nay, in sermons and prayer you could not keep your thoughts upon him. You know what it is to love your friend, to love your money, lands, and pleasure. Do you know by as good experience what it is to love God? and if you love him not above all, you love him not indeed as God. Were you not more weary of holy thoughts, or holy conversation, or prayer, than of your worldly business, or discourse? Was not your heart against the holiness and strictness of God's word, and of his servants? In a word, if you had no enmity to a holy and heavenly mind and life; Gen. iii. 15, James iv. 4, Rom. viii. 7, why did you not choose it? and why could not all God's mercies invite you to it? nor all teaching and entreaties ever persuade you to it? Why are you yet so backward to it? Is this no enmity? And if you were an enemy to holiness, and to the holy word and government of God, was not this to be an enemy to God? I tell you, we are all enemies to God till Christ hath reconciled us, and the Holy Ghost renewed us, and turned the enmity into love.

S. I never laid this state of enmity to heart till now. I knew that I was a sinner; but I knew not that I was an enemy to God, even when I began to fear that he was for my sin an enemy to me. But I find now that it hath been with me just as you say; and I perceive that all sin hath some enmity to God in it.

P. Where God is not loved as God, he is in some sort hated, Rom. i. 30. Psa. lxxxi. 15, lxviii. 1, xxi. 8. Exod. xx. 5. Deut. vii. 10. 2 Chron.

xix. 2. And between love and enmity there is in man no middle state. For none in this are indifferent. If you have read the scripture, and other history, and have but heeded what is done about you in the world, you might easily perceive that the world hath ever consisted of two contrary sorts of men, who, as two armies, are still to this day in constant opposition to each other. The wicked are the devil's seed and army, John viii. 44. And the godly are the army of Christ, and the regenerate seed of God. Whence is all the hatred of godliness on the earth, all the scorn and slanders, and cruel persecutions of holy persons, and the number of martyrs and sufferers, but from this inbred enmity? his is Christ's meaning when he saith, that he ame not to send peace but a sword: because he ame to cause that holiness which the wicked will till hate and persecute. Look about you and see whether we may not yet truly say with St. Paul, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now?" Gal. iv. 29. And we are all of this malignant disposition in some degree till grace recovers us. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 10. So Col. i. 21. He that will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God. The friendship of the world is enmity to God, James iv. 4. I will remind you of no other proof more than Christ's own sentence, which is not unjust. "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them bring hither, and slay them before me," Luke xix. 27. Those that would not have Christ reign over them, (and subdue their worldly minds, and fleshly lusts, and make them holy,) are his enemies. And hath not this been your case?

S. I cannot deny it. The Lord forgive me and have mercy on me. I see now that it is not so easy a matter, nor so common to love God truly, as I thought it was.

P. To love God as God, with all our mind, and heart, and might, is the sum of holiness, the proper fruit of the Spirit, the certain mark of God on the soul, and the surest evidence of his love to us, and the very beginning and foretaste of heaven, 2 Thess. iii. 5, Luke xi. 42, Rom. v. 5, Gal. v. 6, Jude 21. It is that which Christ came into the world to effect, by the most wonderful demonstration of God's love to sinners, as the fittest means to win their love. Faith in Christ is but the bellows to kindle in us the love of God; and faith working by love, is all our religion in a few words. Therefore if love to God were easy and common, all goodness would be so, and salvation would be so.

But having said this much of the love of your soul, and the love of God, what think you next of the love of others? Is that easy also to you?

S. I am sometimes angry when I am wronged or provoked, but I know no one in the world that I wish ill to.

P. So far is well. But, 1. Do you love men more for God and his image on them than for yourself? 2. Do you love your neighbour as yourself? Gal. v. 14; James ii. 8; 1 Pet. ii. 17; iii. 8; Rom. xii. 9, 10; xiii. 9, 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Gal. v. 6, 13, 22; Col. i. 4; 1 Thes. iv. 9; 1 Pet. i. 22; 1 John iv. 7, 8; John xiii. 34; xv. 12, 17; 1 John iv. 7, 11, 12, 20, 21; v. 2; 2 John 5; Col. ii. 2; Eph. iv. 2, 15, 16; v. 2. I pray you understand the matter aright. God must be first and principally loved as the chief and infinite good. He must be

loved for himself, as being goodness itself, and most amiable in himself, and that with all the soul. The creature must be loved only for God, as bearing His image or the marks of His person, and as a means to know, and please and, glorify Him. Those must be most loved who have most of the image of God, in wisdom, righteousness and holiness. The godly must be loved as godly with a special love. Professed Christians must be loved as such. All men, even our enemies, must be loved as men, with a common love, Lev. xix. 18, 34; Matt. v. 44, 46. And all this for God's work upon them, and His interest in them.

But a selfish carnal man, loving his carnal self more than God, doth make himself the standard and reason of his love to others. He loveth not those best who are best and most holy or serviceable to God and the public good; but those that love and honour him most; and those that are most of his opinion; and those that will be ruled by his will, and never cross it; and those that do most for him, and are most profitable to him. A true Christian loveth his neighbour as you love the children of you dearest friend; for the parent's sake. But a carnal man loveth his neighbour partly as a dog loveth his master for feeding him, and partly as all creatures, birds and beasts, do love their companions for likeness of kind, and from sociableness and acquaintance. Have you not loved an ignorant worldling, a profane swearer, a derider of holiness, who loved you, and spake well of you, and took your part, and did you many friendly offices, better than a wise and godly person that never did anything for you, or that had low thoughts of your understanding and honesty, though no worse than indeed you did deserve?

S. I cannot deny but you describe me rightly.

P. And did you never dishonor your governors, prince, or parents? Did you never seek to hurt another, nor desire revenge? Did you never deceive your neighbor, nor wrong him any way in his estate? Did you never belie, nor slander him, nor backbite him, nor falsely accuse him, nor seek to make him hateful or contemptible to others? Did you never envy him, nor covet his estate or honors, nor seek to draw anything from him to yourself? If you did, what love was in all this but self-love?

Nay, what labour and cost have you been at to save the souls of miserable sinners, or to relieve their bodies? And he that seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up the bowels of his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 1 John iii. 17, iv. 12. At what rates, and with what condescension, self-denial and diligence have you showed your neighbours that you love them?

At least hath it been with any such love as you love yourself? How easily can you bear your neighbour's wrongs, reproaches, slanders, poverty, sickness, in comparison of your own? You can aggravate his faults, and make excuses for your own, and judge him very culpable, and censurable, and punishable, for that which you make nothing of in yourself.

S. I must confess I have sinned against the love of God, of myself, and of my neighbour. And I see that I must have a better heart before I can truly love God, myself, and my neighbour, for the time to come.

P. I have now plainly opened to you the nature of true conversion; what say you now to it upon consideration of the whole? Can you heartily consent to it, and thus give up yourself to God and to Jesus Christ, or not?

S. O sir, it is a great business. I must have many a thought of it yet before I understand it well; and many a thought more to overcome all the backwardness of my heart. Such a work is not to be rashly done.

P. I like your answer, so that it do not come from unwillingness and desire of delay. That which must needs be done or you are forever undone, cannot be done too soon so it be done well. But I must first tell you in what manner you must give yourself up to God, if you mean to be a Christian indeed.

1. You must consent to the whole covenant of God, and not only to some part: you must be devoted to your Creator, your Redeemer, and your Sanctifier—Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; xi. 28; Luke xix. 27; Rom. xiv. 9; Eph. i. 22; Luke xiv. 26, to the end; Rom. viii. 17; Matt. xiii. 46, vi. 19, 20—you must take for your Owner, your Ruler, and your Saviour: you must desire to be sanctified as well as pardoned, and to be saved from sin, and not only from punishment.

2. You must understand all the terms well, and count the cost, and reckon upon taking up the cross, and denying yourself, and forsaking all this world in heart and resolution for Christ, and take God and heaven for your whole portion, and resolve to stick to God if you have nothing else, and if you meet with ever so much tribulation in the world. You must believe that heaven is as sure as if you saw it, and take that and the necessary means thereto for all your part, and not reckon upon ease, pleasure, profit, or safety to the flesh.

3. You must covenant absolutely without any secret exceptions or reserves—Luke xiv. 26, 33. If you secretly keep a reserve in your heart, that you

will come to Christ, but upon trial, and that you will be religious as far as will stand with your prosperity and safety in the world. If you except secretly either honour, estate or life, which you resolve not to lay down if Christ require it, you then play the hypocrite and lose all.

4. You must consent to a present change, and at present thus wholly give up yourself to God, for if you do but consent to repent and be converted some time hence, this is at present no repentance, conversion, nor true covenanting with God. All this you must understand and do.

And now I will give you time to learn and resolve of all this that I have said to you. Read over and over the summary of Christian doctrine which I have written, and what you understand not ask the meaning of it: and when you have done all, come to me and tell me your resolution. And if God shall convince you that this which I have set forth is His will and way, then I adjure thee as in His dreadful presence that thou delay no longer, but resolve, and absolutely give up thyself to God as thy heavenly Father, thy saviour, and thy Sanctifier, and make an everlasting covenant with Him, and then He and all His mercies will be thine: His grace will help thee, and His mercy pardon thee: His ministers will instruct thee, and His people pray for thee and assist thee: His angels will guard thee, and His Spirit comfort thee: and when flesh must fail, and thou must leave this world, thy Saviour will then receive thy soul, and bring it into the participation of His glory: and He will raise thy body, and justify thee before the world, and make thee equal to the angels: and thou shalt live in the sight and love of God, and and in the everlasting pleasures of His glory. This

is the end of faith and holiness. But if thou harden thy heart and refuse mercy, everlasting woe will be thy portion, and then there will be no remedy—Luke xix. 27; Prov. xxix. 1, i. 25, to the end.

And now I beg of thee, and I will beg of God on my bended knees, that these few words may sink into thy heart, and that thou wouldst bethink thee as a man that must shortly die, whether any deserve thy love and obedience more than God? and thy thankful remembrance more than Christ? and thy care and diligence more than thy salvation? Is there any felicity more desirable than heaven? or any misery more terrible than hell? or anything so worthy thy regard as that which is everlasting? Will a few days of fleshly pleasures pay for the loss of heaven and thy immortal soul? or will thy sin and thy prosperity be sweet at death and in the day of judgment? As thou art a man, and as ever thou believest that there is a God and a world to come, and as thou carest for thy soul, whether it be saved or damned, I beseech thee, I charge thee, think of these things; think of them once a day at least! think of them with thy most sober serious thoughts! make not a jest of salvation or damnation! I know thou livest in a distracted world, where thou wilt hear some laughing at such things as these, and scorning at a holy life, and casting reproaches on the godly, and merrily drinking, and playing, and prating away their time, and then saying that they will trust God with their souls, and hope to be saved without so much ado! But if all these men do not change their minds, and be not shortly down in the mouth, and would not be glad to eat their words, and wish that they had lived a holy life, though it had cost them scorn and suffering in the world, let me bear the

shame of a deceiver for ever; but if God and thy conscience bear witness against thy sin, and tell thee that a holy life is best, regard not the gain-sayings of a bedlam world, which is drunk with the delusions of the flesh; but give up thy soul and life to God by Jesus Christ in a faithful covenant! Delay no longer, man, but resolve; resolve immediately, resolve unchangeably; and God will be thine, and thou shalt be his forever.

A Prayer for converting grace, to be used by the unconverted, who are convinced of their sinful, miserable state.

O MOST holy, just, and dreadful God, yet gracious and ready to receive poor sinners, who penitently return unto thee by faith in Christ, pitifully behold a miserable sinner, who is prostrate as at thy feet, and fleeth with fear from thy terrible justice, in hope of thy pardoning and saving mercy. I hear from thy Word that thou hast redeemed the world by Jesus Christ, and He hath satisfied thy justice as a propitiation for our sins, and hath merited thy pardoning saving grace, for all that truly believe and repent, and heartily accept of Christ for the saving work and benefits of His mediation. But I hear that except we repent we shall all perish; and he that believeth not shall be damned; and that except we be born again of the Spirit, and be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God; and that without holiness none shall see thee; and that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His; and that all

who are in Christ are new creatures, old things are passed away, and all things are become new ; and that the carnal mind is enmity, and neither is nor can be subject to thy law ; and that if we live after the flesh we shall die ; and that Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.

I am convinced, O Lord, that thou art my Creator, and therefore my Owner, and that I and all that I have and can do, should be used to thy glory as thine own. As also that thou art the rightful Gov, ernor of the world ; that thy laws are holy, and just- and good ; that my baseness and folly and corrupted will do make me unfit to rule myself. I am convinced that thou art best, and best to me, and that I should love thee with all my heart, and deem all the pleasures, and riches, and honours of this world vile in comparison of thee. I am convinced that all this world is vanity, and heaven alone, where thou art seen and perfectly loved and praised, is the only felicity of souls, and should be sought before all transitory things. I am convinced that thou art the first and last, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, both I and all things are. And I am convinced that my forsaking thee, and turning to my carnal self and this deceitful world, and all my sins, deserve thy wrath and my destruction ; and that I have no hope but in penitent sincere conversion to thee, by faith in Christ the only Reconciler.

But alas, the hardness of my heart, the power of unbelief and fleshly lusts, prevaileth against all this conviction ! I fear lest all my knowledge will but condemn me to be beaten with many stripes ! When I know that I should do good, evil is present with me ; and the will of the flesh prevaileth against thy holy will. The custom of sinning hath increased my

sinful inclination; and I have not a will which hateth my pleasant and gainful sins; I forbear them often through fear, while I love them and wish that thou didst not forbid them. Long have I been wishing and purposing to repent, and come to thee; but alas, how many purposes have I changed, and how many promises have I broken, and how many wishes have come to nothing. My corrupted will, enslaved by my sense, will not change itself, nor forsake the pleasant vanities which it loveth.

O that I had a heart, a will to love thee as much above all the world, as I know I should love thee! and to delight in thee and in thy holy ways, in thy grace, and in the hopes of glory, as much as I know thou art more delectable than all the pleasures of the world and sin! O that I had a heart that would enlargedly run the way of thy commandments, and did delight to do thy will, O God; and did still obey thee from the power of love! O that the new nature did more strongly incline me to thee and to thy service, than my corrupted nature inclineth me to the interest of carnal self and sense! O that I had a heart to believe in Christ as strongly as I know I should believe in Him, and to hate sin as much as I am convinced that I should hate it; and to live by faith and not by sight.

And though these desires may be but from the power of self-love and the fears of hell, O that I had more spiritual and sincere desires!

I have corrupted this heart, O Lord, but I cannot renew it. I have defiled it, but I cannot cleanse it. I have kindled in it the fire of sinful lusts, but I cannot quench it. I have undone myself, and rejected that Saviour and resisted that Holy Spirit who should have sanctified and saved me; and I

have not a thought nor a desire, a will nor an endeavor for my own recovery, but of Thy gift; nor shall I so much as forbear my own sin and destruction, unless Thy mercy turn me or restrain me. I have none to flee to now, or in the hour of my last extremity, but that God whom I have so heinously offended; I have none to trust in, but the Saviour whom I have so unthankfully neglected! I have none to regenerate and make clean my soul, but the same Spirit whom I have so long resisted!

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to the greatness of Thy mercy. I have sinned like a frail and foolish man; but do Thou have mercy on me, as a gracious God. As my sin hath abounded, let Thy grace much more abound. When I hear of the wonderful design of Thy love in saving lost sinners by Jesus Christ, and at what rate He hath redeemed souls, it reviveth my hope and fainting heart! when I think it is not the way of Thy providence to bring men by innocency to heaven, but by healing and recovering grace; and that all men's souls, save Christ's, that are now in heaven, were once sinners on earth, as I now am; and that Thou hast glorified none but such as were first condemned by Thy law, and had deserved everlasting death, it emboldeneth me to hope for mercy and salvation. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. I am dead in sin, and almost past feeling. O when wilt Thou quicken me, and cure my stupidity! I have a heart as hard as stone itself. It feeleth not sin. It feareth not Thy judgments as it ought; it relisheth not aright Thy mercy; it trembleth not to think of death and hell, though I have no assurance to be thence one day! O when wilt Thou turn this stone into a new and tender heart! I have a pre-

sumptuous and self-flattering heart, that will hardly fear what it would not feel! I have a careless sottish heart, which little regardeth the things of everlasting consequence; as if it cared not where I dwell forever. O when wilt Thou give me a necessary care of my own salvation! The spirit of slumber hath seized on me! I see my sins, and cannot forbear them! I see my duty, and I have not a heart to do it! I see my danger, and yet run upon it! I foresee the dreadful awakening day of death and judgment, when the most senseless sinners shall feel and fear; and yet I have not a heart to stir, and cry for grace, and strive as for the life of a miserable soul, nor fly to Christ, and improve the day of my visitation. I know that this is the accepted time, and this is the day of salvation! and all that ever must be done for heaven must be quickly done! I know that I must now be saved from sin, or else I shall never be saved from hell; and yet, alas, my slumbering senseless soul awaketh not! I see time is swiftly posting away; my glass is almost run out: the frailties of my decaying corruptible flesh are daily warning me to prepare! but I cannot, I cannot, alas, Lord, I cannot! there is not a heart in me to believe and feel, and to set on duty, and to do my part. My time is going! O precious time! it is going Lord, and almost gone! many that have gone to the grave before me, have been my warnings! I have but a few breaths more to breathe, and I am gone from hence for ever; and yet, alas, my work is undone! my soul is unready! If I die this night, O where shall I awake, and where must I take up my endless dwelling! it is thy wonderful mercy which hath kept me alive and from hell so long! the time that is past will never return! it is in vain to call it

back. When I am once gone hence, there is no returning to live better, or to die better, and make a better preparation for eternity. It must be now or never; and yet my senseless sluggish soul scarce feeleth or stirreth at all this. O thou that art the living God, that raisedst Jesus Christ from the dead, revive and raise this stupid soul. Lord Jesus, raise me, by thy quickening Spirit, who hath raised millions that were dead in sin. O speak effectually that word of life, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Awake me by thy grace, lest the thunder of thy wrath, and the fire of hell to late awake me!

And Lord, I have a dark, an ignorant, a prejudiced, and an unbelieving heart: it staggereth at thy word! it questioneth the scriptures! it looketh strangely upon Christ himself! it looketh doubtingly and amazedly towards the world to come. I am so captivated in flesh, and used to live by sight and sense, that I can scarce believe or apprehend the things unseen, though thou hast revealed them with certain evidence! O for one beam of thy heavenly illumination! pity a dark and unbelieving soul! alas, if unbelief prevail, Christ will be as no Christ to me, and the promise as no promise, and heaven as no heaven. O heal this evil heart of unbelief, which hath neglected Christ, his sacrifice, merits, doctrine, example, his covenant, and his intercession, and hath departed from the living God. A promise is left us of entering into rest. O let me not fall short of unbelief! let me be taught by the inward light of thy Spirit, to understand the light of thy Holy word, and leave me not in the power of the prince of darkness.

And, Lord, my will is as sinful as my mind. It is biassed by sense, and followeth the rage of lust

and appetite! O how little is it inclined to thee, and to heaven, and to any holy work! I can love my flesh! I can love my food! and ease, and wealth! I can love my friend! yea, wretch that I am, I can love my sin, my brutish God-provoking sin! but O that I could say, I love my Saviour, and love my God, and love the place of glorious perfection above all these! O touch this heart with the loadstone of thy love! O kindle it in this heavenly fire! nothing will do it but the holy spirit of love, working with the revelation of thy wonderful love in Jesus Christ. Hold the eye of my soul upon my Saviour! upon my humbled crucified Saviour! upon my ascended, glorified, interceding Saviour! and let me never cease gazing on this glass of love, and hearing this heavenly messenger of thy love, till thy blessed co-operating Spirit of love have turned my heart into love itself; even into that love which is the living image of thy love! and then in Christ I shall be lovely to thee.

As ever thou hadst mercy on a miserable sinner, have mercy on me, and renew this soul! Of all mercies in the world, O give me thy Holy Spirit, through the mediation of my dear Redeemer! even the Spirit of life, and light, and love. And let this be Christ's advocate and witness in me, and the witness, earnest, and pledge of my salvation. Of all plagues, O save me from the plague of a heart forsaken by thy Spirit, and left in death and darkness and disaffection! Is it not thy will that I should pray for grace! Hast thou not said that thou wilt give thy Holy Spirit to them that ask! I hope it is not without thy Spirit that I beg thy Spirit. Had I asked for riches and honours and the pleasures of sin, no wonder if my prayer had been denied, or

granted with a curse. But wilt thou deny me the grace which thou didst bid me ask? the holiness which thou lovest! without which I cannot love or serve thee, but shall serve thine enemy to my own destruction. O thou that hast sworn that thou hast not pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live—have mercy upon me; and sanctify this sinful miserable soul, that I may live in the fruitful and delightful exercise of thy grace, unto thy glory here, and may live in the delights of thy glorious love for ever more; through the merits and intercession of my blessed Saviour, who hath encouraged me, with the publican, to hang down this ashamed face, and smite upon this guilty breast, and in hope through His name to cry unto thee, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Amen, amen.

THE THIRD CONFERENCE.

THE RESOLUTION AND ACTUAL CONVERSION OF A SINNER.

PAUL. WELCOME, neighbour, you have been longer away than I expected: what was the matter with you?

SAUL. O sir, I have seen and felt the heavy hand of God since I saw you. We have had a violent fever common among us, and I narrowly escaped with my life myself.

[P. I trust that this affliction will be for your good. Tell me, how did your sickness find you resolved respecting God and your soul? and where, think you, would have been your portion if God had called you away?]

S. Alas, sir; my own wicked heart did hinder me much after our last conversation, and I thank God that he did not cut me of in the midst of my doubts. I went home convinced that your words were true, and that I must become a new creature, or be undone.

I read over the texts of scripture you gave me, and studied the meaning of them; but my ignorance so darkened my mind that all seemed strange and new to me, though I had often heard them before. And being very unskilful in such matters myself, I went oft to my neighbour David, as you advised me, and, I thank him, he gladly helped me

to understand the words and things which were too hard for me. But when I had done all this, my worldly business took up my thoughts so, and the cares of my family were so much at my heart, and my old companions so often tempted me, and my flesh was so loth to let go all my sinful pleasures, and the matters of religion were so strange to me, that I delayed my resolution, and continued still purposing that I would shortly turn; but while I was purposing and delaying, the fever took me, and then God by his terrors did awaken me out of my delays.

P. Oh what an unreasonable thing is it to delay when you are once convinced! 2 Cor. vi. 2. What! delay to come out of the bondage of the devil? the guilt of sin? the flames of Sodom? the wrath of God? If death take you in an unconverted state, you are lost for ever. What if you had died formerly in your sin? What if you die this night? What assurance have you to live an hour? Alas, how brittle and corruptible a thing is the body of a man! And by what a wonder of providence do we live! Is sin so good? Is the state of a sinner so safe or comfortable, that any should be loth to leave it? Is God, and Christ, and heaven so bad that any should delay, and be loth to be godly? Can you be happy too soon? or too soon be a child of God; or too soon get out of the danger of damnation? Is God hateful? Is sin and misery lovely, that you are so loth to change? If sin be best, keep it still. If God and heaven be worst, never think of turning to him. But if best, do you not presently desire the best? 1 Kings xviii. 21. Must Christ and his Holy Spirit wait on you while you take the other cup, and stay your leisure while you

are destroying yourself? How know you but the Spirit of God may forsake you, and leave you to your own will, and lust, and counsel, Psa. lxxxi. 11, 12, and say, Be hardened, and be filthy still? What a forlorn miserable creature would you be! Do you not know that every sin, and every delay, and every resistance of the Spirit, doth tend to the greater hardening of your heart, and making your conversion less hopeful and more hard? Psa. cxix. 60. Do you hope for pardon and mercy from God, or do you not? If not, desperation would begin your hell. If you do, is it honest to desire to commit more of that sin which you mean to repent of, and to beg for pardon of from God? Dare you say in your heart, Lord, I have abused thee, and thy Son, and Spirit, and mercy long; I will abuse thee yet a little longer, and then I will repent and ask forgiveness. Do you love to contemn a little longer that Saviour, whom you must flee to and trust to at the last? Do you not purpose to love him and honour him afterward and for ever? And yet would you a little longer despise and injure him? Would you gratify and please the devil a little longer? and root and strengthen sin a little more before you pull it up? and kindle a greater flame in your house before you quench it? Must you needs give yourself a few more stabs, before you go to the physician? Is your life too long? And hath God given you too much time, that you are desirous to lose a little more? Are you afraid of too easy an assurance of forgiveness, that you would make it harder, and would invite despair, by sinning wilfully against knowledge and conviction? What will you delay for? Do you think ever to find the market fall, and Christ come down to lower terms, and change his law and

gospel, to excuse you for not changing your heart and life? Do you ever look to find conversion an easier work than now? Do you know how much more you have to do when you are converted? What knowledge, faith, hope, assurance, and patience, and comfort more to get? How many temptations to overcome, and how many duties to perform, and what a work it is to prepare for immortality? And are you afraid of having too much time, and beginning so great a work too soon? Believe it, Satan doth not loiter: time stands not still: sun, and moon, and all the creatures delay not to afford you all their service. Delay is a denial: God needs not you, but you need him. You would not have him delay to help you, in the time of your pain and great extremity. Patience will not be abused for ever. Behold this is the accepted time, behold this is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. Heb. iii. 7, 13, 15, iv. 7. O that you knew what others are enjoying and what you are losing, all the time that you delay, and on how slippery ground you stand! and what after sorrows you are preparing for yourself!

S. Sir, I thank you for your awakening convincing reasons; but I was telling you how God hath already, I hope, resolved me against any longer delay. When I thought I must presently die, all my sins and all your counsels came into my mind; and the fear of God's displeasurs did overwhelm me. I thought I had but a few days to be out of hell. And O what would I not have given for assurance of pardon by Jesus Christ, and for a little more time of preparation in the world, before my soul did enter upon eternity! Oh I never saw the face of sin, the truth of God's threatenings, the need of a

Saviour, the preciousness of time, the madness of delaying, thoroughly until then. And now, sir, the great mercy of God having restored me, I come presently to you to profess my resolution, and to take your further good advice.

P. You see that God is merciful to us, when we think that he is destroying us. Afflictions are not the least of God's mercies, which our dull and hardened hearts make necessary, Psa. cxix. 61, 71, 75, 1 Thess. i. 6. Such fools that we are that we will not understand without the rod. My advice is that you read over here again the doctrine of christianity which I gave you in our second day's conference, and let me see whether you understand and believe it, and consent to give yourself up to God upon the terms which it describes.—(Here Saul readeth it over).

S. You would have me understand what I do; I desire you here to answer me these few doubts, that I may proceed more clearly and with a good understanding of that which I am about.

Quest. I. What must I trust to for the pardon of my sin, and which way and on what terms may I be sure of it?

P. The prime cause is God's mercy; this mercy hath given Jesus Christ to be our Redeemer. Christ hath by perfect holiness and obedience, and by becoming a sacrifice to God for our sins, deserved and purchased our pardon and salvation: so that you must trust to the sacrifice and meritorious righteousness of Christ alone, as the purchasing meritorious cause of your forgiveness and of your reconciliation, justification, sanctification, and salvation. [But the way in which God communicates these blessings to us is by sending his Spirit into our hearts, that we

may discover our guilt and wretchedness, and cordially accept this salvation on his own terms.

So you must understand the mercy of God to be the fountain from which this benefit comes; the blood and righteousness of Christ as that which has merited and purchased it for sinners; the Holy Spirit as applying it to our hearts so that we may have an interest in it; and the gift itself or the benefit communicated, is the pardon of sin, grace to renew the heart, and a title to heaven, or justification, sanctification, and a sure hope of future glory.]

S. Quest. II. Are all my sins pardonable, whatsoever? I have been a greater sinner than you know of. Alas, my sins have been so many and so great, that I can hardly think that God will pardon them!

[P. God does not bestow his pardon by halves; none are placed beyond his mercy; and there are no sins which may not be forgiven if we truly repent of them and humbly seek His pardon. There are some texts in the Bible about Christ and His salvation which seem to be written on purpose to persuade us of this; as when it is said, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him;" and again, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."]

S. Quest. III. But I shall sin again in some degree; how then must I have pardon of my sins hereafter?

[P. Your daily offences will need a daily repentance and application to Christ. The faithful are not delivered from sin altogether when they are converted to God; only set free from its dominion, so that they no longer habitually consent to it and delight in it. They are sanctified or made holy; and therefore no longer lead an ungodly, sensual, worldly life. But

they have still an evil, corrupt nature within them, and are placed in the midst of temptations of various kinds, so that many a time they wound their own consciences, and offend their kind and gracious Master by short-comings and disobedience. And therefore they constantly need to be washed from their impurity in the precious blood of Christ, which is likened in scripture to a "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness."]

S. Quest. IV. How must I do for grace and strength to keep my covenant when I have made it?

P. Of yourself you can do nothing that is good—John xv. 5. Your heart is so corrupted with sin till it be sanctified, that you will not be willing; and your mind is so blind that you will not well understand your duty nor your interest; and your soul so dead, and impotent, and weak, that you will have no life or strength to practice what you know. But if the Spirit of Christ do once give you faith, and repentance, and consent, by this you have right to him as an indwelling principle—Rom. viii. 4, 9—and you are then entered into covenant relation to the Holy Ghost. [And that which he will do for you is to make you alive towards God—Eph. ii. 1-3, 5; i. 18, 19; Acts xxvi. 18; Rom. v. 3-6, 10; 2 Tim. i. 7—and help you to understand and obey and delight in His will.] But you must know how to obey His motions, and not resist Him.

S. Quest. V. What must I do to get, keep, and obey the Spirit, that I lose it not, and miss not of these benefits?

P. You must know that God hath first possessed Christ's human glorified nature with the Spirit, that He may have it as the Head, and from Him it is to come to us as His members. Therefore the increase

and actual helps and comfort of the Spirit are given you on condition of your dependence on Christ for the daily communication of it. And your business is to wait on him in the daily exercise of faith and use of all His instituted ordinances, and to obey the motions of His Spirit.

S. Quest. VI. How shall I do to know the operations and motions of the Spirit from delusions, and how shall I know whether I have the Spirit or not?

P. 1. The Spirit is from God and our Saviour, and leadeth to them. I told you its operations are 1. Holy life toward God—John iii. 5, 6; Col. iii. 10; 2 Tim. i. 7; 2 Cor. v. 17; Tit. iii. 3, 5; Gal. iv. 6. 2. Holy light to know and believe God. 3. Holy love to love God, and His government and children. If you have these, you have God's Spirit. These are God's restored image on the soul, and the new Divine nature of His regenerate adopted children.

2. The motions of the Spirit, too, we must remember, are always agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and must be tried by them. For the Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself, and what He teaches now must agree with what he has written.]

S. Quest. VII. What then is the law and rule that I must live by, according to the covenant that I make?

P. God is the universal Sovereign, and He hath made Christ Head over all things. [The law, therefore to which we must be subject is the law of Christ, our King and Master; and this is contained in the Holy Scriptures, which we must search diligently, and endeavor, by the help of God's grace, to live by the rule which we find there.] But God hath moreover officers under Him in the world, such

as parents and masters in families, pastors and ministers in churches, kings and magistrates in kingdoms. These are to promote the execution of God's laws, and to that end to make subordinate laws or commands of their own, about things which God hath not determined in His universal law.

S. Quest. VIII. What are the means which I must use, in attendance on Christ and his Spirit?

P. 1. The reading and hearing of God's word, and its explanation and application by your teachers—2 Tim. iv. 1, 2; 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Acts ii. throughout; 1 Cor. xi. xiv.; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; Jam. v. 16.

2. Prayer, thanksgiving, praises to God, and the Lord's supper in communion with his church.

[3. The counsel of godly neighbours and friends who are better instructed and further advanced in the ways of religion than yourself. This, under God, hath been a great help to many.]

S. Quest. IX. What must I do with my calling, and labour, and estate in the world: must I forsake it or not?

P. Adam was to labour in innocency: Six days must you labour and do all that you have to do, Exod. xx. He that will not labour, if able, is unworthy to eat, 2 Thess. iii. 10. Idleness was one of Sodom's sins; religion must be no pretence for slothfulness. You must not love the world as your felicity, or for itself, or for your fleshly lusts, 1 John ii. 15, 16. But you must make use of the world, in the service of your Creator, and look upon it as a wilderness way to your promised inheritance; as the mariner loveth not the sea for a dwelling, but as a passage to his desired port. Good husbandry is not unbeseeming a good christian. You

must labour for your daily bread as well as pray for it; yea for the maintenance of your family, and that you may have things decent, and to give to him that needeth, Rom. xii. 17, 2 Cor. viii. 21 Eph. iv. 28. 1 Tim. v. 8.

But this is the thing that you must principally remember, that God and the heavenly glory is your end, which must still be desired for itself, and before all, Matt. vi. 19, 20, 33. John vi. 27. Col. iii. 3—5. And the world and all things in it are but means to help you to that end; and only as they are such, must be valued, loved, desired, and sought; and whenever they oppose God and your heavenly interest, must be forsaken, and used as we do hated things, Luke xiv. 26. 33.

And when common worldly things thus further your obedience, and are devoted to God, and referred to his will and service, then they are sanctified to you; which else will be but common, unclean, and your mortal enemy, Tit. i. 15

S. Quest. X. What if I am now uncertain whether my heart be sincere in this covenant which I make with God, when I renounce all, and profess to prefer him before all? may I venture to covenant, and profess that consent whose sincerity I am uncertain of? Will not this be a kind of lying unto God?

P. If your heart be false, it will be lying: but if it be not, it will be no lying though you are uncertain. The truth of your consent is one thing, and your certainty of it is another. That it *be true*, is necessary to your salvation; but not that you be *sure* that it is true. But there is much difference between,. 1. One that flattereth himself with conceits that he consenteth, when he doth not. (Such a one sinneth in professing a lie.) 2. And one that

is but yet deliberating and is unresolved what to choose and do. (This person must not covenant till he feel the scales turn by a true resolution.) 3. And one that truly consenteth and resolveth; but is afraid lest his deceitful heart be not sincere in it. (This person must covenant in this uncertainty.) Because all that can be expected from us is, that we speak our own minds according to the best acquaintance with them that we can get; otherwise we must forbear all thanksgiving for special mercies, and a great part of our worship of God, till we are certain of the sincerity of our own hearts; which too many are not.

S. Quest. XI. What if it prove that my heart is not sincere? or what if I should fall away again hereafter?

P. 1. If your heart be not sincere in your consent to the covenant, you will remain unpardoned in your sin and misery, till it be sincere, Psa. xxxii. 1, 2.

2. If you fall into a particular sin, I have told you how you must be restored by renewed repentance for it, through faith in Christ. But as you love God and your soul take heed of wilful sinning, [for this will endanger your salvation, and quench the Spirit, and provoke him to leave you to yourself; and even if, by renewed repentance, you escape condemnation, will yet bring grievous distress upon your soul, as you know was the case with king David and the apostle Peter.]

S. I am much afraid lest when temptation cometh I should turn again to my former folly, though God forbid I should renounce my Saviour. I am so entangled in ill company, and in a custom of sinning, and have so bad a nature, and so many

temptations and wordly snares, that though I am now resolved, I am afraid lest I should yield and lose my resolutions.

P. It becometh you to fear it that so you may prevent it, Heb. iv. 1. But this fear should not hinder you from resolving and consenting. For,

1. You know that sin is hateful, and its pleasures are poison and deceit; and therefore that this world affordeth nothing, to stand in competition with God, and your salvation. If you will take this world for your part, you are undone; if you will not, resolve accordingly. But dream not of joining sin and holiness, or the worldly and the heavenly happiness into one, and dividing your heart and service between God and mammon, Matt. vi. 24. For that is the damning self-deceit of hypocrites.

2. You shall not only have that which is an hundred fold better than all that you forsake; but you shall have the world itself, refined and sanctified to your greater good. You would have it as your fleshly felicity; God will have you renounce it in that sense; but He will give it you as your daily provision for His service, and as the blessed means to further your salvation; that you may see God in every creature, and thank Him for it, and serve Him by it. And one mercy thus sanctified is worth a thousand abused: ten pounds or ten shillings a year used for God to further your salvation, is better than lordships and kingdoms used to serve the flesh and the devil, and to prepare men for damnation. Read James v.

3. When you are once entered well into the service of God, you will find that light which will shame all temptations, and that sweet experience

of greater pleasures which will make you loathe what formerly you loved: the comforts of faith, and hope, and love, will make you despise and reject the filthy pleasures of the flesh.

4. And you will have the direction, encouragement, and example of those that fear God; and the help of all His holy ordinances.

5. And, which is more, you will be planted into Christ, and receive the communications of His Spirit, and His strength will be magnified in your weakness; you are not to trust in your own strength, but in the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the communion and operation of the Holy Ghost.

6. And your resolution is a matter of absolute necessity: you must resolve, or perish forever: you must consent or be condemned as a rejector of salvation. God sets before you Christ, and holiness, and heaven: the devil sets before you the pleasures of sin for a moment, and everlasting damnation in the end, Heb. xi. 25, 26, etc. Take which you will; for one you must have. There is no middle way; no reconciling both together.

The truth is, it is that shameful folly which you must lament, that in so great, so necessary, so plain a case, you should be unresolved to this day! that a man in his wits should live twenty years so, as if he had been resolved to be damned; and after that stay so long delaying before he can resolve, whether he were best be saved or not? What! Is it yet a hard question to you whether God or the devil be your owner, and the better friend and master? and whether heaven or hell be the better dwelling? and whether sin or holiness be the better life? and whether you should consent that Christ and his Spirit save you from your sins or not? Have you

so long taken on you to be a Christian? and are you yet unresolved whether it is best to be a Christian indeed, or not? Certainly you have had leisure enough, and reason enough set before you, to have resolved you long ago, Josh. xxiv. 15, 1 Cor. xv. 58. Till you firmly resolve, you are not a Christian and convert indeed. If you did well know what a case you stand in till you are resolved, and what a scorn and indignity you put upon your God, and Saviour, and heaven, to make a question of it whether the filth of sin, and the dreaming profits and pleasures of this world, be not better than they, and whether your Redeemer, after all his love, should be preferred before a fleshly lust, you would fear and blush, to make such a question any more.

S. But I have been used so long to a looser life, that I am afraid I shall be weary of a strict, religious, godly course, and shall never be able to hold out.

P. I tell you again, that if you think of the life that you must turn to, as a tedious, melancholy, grievous state, you know it not; and are not well informed what it is that you have to do. It is in reality the only honorable, the only profitable, the only safe, and the only pleasant life in the world.

I will give you but a taste of it in some particulars.

You must indeed repent of sin with shame and godly sorrow, and loathing of yourself, Luke xiii. 3, 5, xv. throughout. 2 Cor. xi. But it is no further than fitteth you for the comforts of pardoning and healing grace.

2. You must believe all the comfortable promises of the Gospel; all the love that Christ hath manifested: all the wonderful history of his life,

and death and resurrection, and ascension, and heavenly glory; the certainty of his word, and gracious covenant.

3. You must believe the wonderful love of the Father in giving us his Son, and reconciling us to himself, and adopting us as his sons, and undertaking to secure us as his peculiar treasure, and giving us his Holy Spirit, John iii. 16. 1 John iii. 1.

4. You must live under the helps and consolations of the Holy Ghost, still drawing you to God, and making you more holy, and helping your infirmities against your sins.

5. You must live in the hopes and desires of everlasting glory, verily expecting to see Christ glorified, with all the saints and blessed angels, and to see the glory of God, and with a perfected soul and body, perfectly to feel his love, and perfectly to love and praise him to eternity.

6. In all your sickness, wants, persecutions, and death itself, you have all these comforts, and this hope of glory to be a constant cordial at your heart, 1 Cor. xv, 55, &c. 1 Thess. iv. 13. 15—18. 2 Tim. iv. 8. Phil. i. 21. 23. 2 Cor. v. 1. 3. 5—9. iv. 16– 18. And when others are afraid of death for fear of hell, you must welcome it as the door to endless life.

7. You must live in the church, in the communion of saints, where all God's ordinances must be your helps for the daily exercise of all these graces and delights. And your chief exercises of piety must be hearing these glad tidings in the gospel opened to you; begging for more grace; joyful thanksgiving for all these mercies; singing forth and speaking the praises of Jehovah; and with joy and thankfulness, feasting upon Christ's flesh, and

blood, and spirit in the sacrament thereof, and there, in the renewing of this your covenant, receiving a renewed sealed pardon, and new degrees of life and strength.

Tell me now what trouble is in all this? that a man should be afraid or weary of it? Unless you take it for a trouble to be safe and happy, to have the greatest mercies, the greatest hopes, and to live in the love of your dearest friend, and in the foretastes of everlasting joys. In a word, "Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. iv. 8.

S. You tell me of another kind of godliness than I thought of. And I was the more afraid it had been a melancholy tedious life, because I saw many that professed it, live so.

P. I told you the reasons of that before, which I need not repeat. And moreover to young beginners, that come new out of another kind of life, and whose souls by grace are not yet suited to the work, it may seem strange and troublesome. And the truth is many converts at the beginning are moved at a sermon, and stifle their own convictions, and open not their case to their teachers, or else fall not into the hands of a judicious guide, who will clearly open to them the true nature of conversion; and so they set on they know not well what: which maketh me lay all these matters so plainly and distinctly before you. Because it will be a wonderful prevention to your troubles and dangers after, if you do but set out well instructed in the beginning.

But the worst and most common cause of all is, that people are so exceedingly ignorant and dull, (together with their indisposedness,) that one must

be whole months, if not years, before we can make them understand these few plain things which here I have opened to you. But yet we must take up with a dark and general understanding rather than delay too long, or be too strict with them.

S. I thank God for your counsel and His grace; I am resolved, and ready to subscribe my resolution, to be the Lord's entirely upon His covenant terms.

P. I will go home with you to your house, and I will try whether you and I can instruct all your family that need it, and bring them to the same resolution. For as it is your duty to endeavour it, so God useth to bless His believing servants, with the conversion of their households with them; as the cases of the jailer, and Lydia, Zaccheus, Stephanus, and others show us. And it will be a great mercy to you, if God give you but a family willing to go along with you in the way to heaven; and daily to worship the same God, and obey Him. Then your house will be part of the family of God, and under His continual blessing and protection.

A confession and prayer for a penitent sinner.

O most great, most wise, and gracious God, though Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity, and canst not be reconciled unto sin; yet through the mediation of Thy blessed Son, with pity behold this miserable sinner, who casteth himself down at the footstool of Thy grace. Had I lived to those high and holy ends, for which I was created and redeemed, I might now have come to Thee with the boldness and confidence of a child, in assurance of Thy love and

favour: but I have played the fool and the rebel against Thee. I have wilfully forgotten the God that made me, and the Saviour that redeemed me, and the endless glory which Thou didst set before me. I forgot the business which I was sent for into the world; and have lived as if I had been made for nothing, but to pass a few days in fleshly pleasure, and pamper a carcase for the worms. I wilfully forgot what it is to be a man, who hath reason given him to rule his flesh, and to know his God, and to foresee his death, and the state of immortality. And I made my reason a servant to my senses, and lived too much like the beasts that perish. Oh the precious time which I have lost, which all the world cannot call back! Oh the calls of grace which I have neglected! and the teachings of God which I have resisted! the wonderful love which I unthankfully rejected! and the manifold mercies which I have abused, and turned into wantonness and sin! How deep is the guilt which I have contracted! And how great are the comforts which I have lost! I might have lived all this while in the love of Thee, my gracious God; and in the delights of Thy holy word and ways; in the daily sweet foresight of heaven, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost; if I would have been ruled by Thy righteous laws. But I have hearkened to the flesh, and to this wicked and deceitful world; and have preferred a short and sinful life, before Thy love, and endless glory.

Alas, what have I been doing since I came into the world? Folly and sin have taken up my time. I am ashamed to look back upon the years which I have spent; and to think of the temptations which I have yielded to! Alas, what trifles have enticed

me from my God! How little time have I had for the pleasures which I have lost! Like Esau I have profanely sold my birth-right for one morsel. To please my fancy, my appetite, and my lust, I have set light by all the joys of heaven! I have unkindly despised the goodness of my Maker! I have slighted the love and grace of my Redeemer! I have resisted Thy Holy Spirit, silenced my own conscience, and grieved Thy ministers, and my most faithful friends! and have brought myself into this woful case, wherein I am a shame and a burden to myself; and God is my terror, who should be my only hope and joy.

Thou knowest my secret sins, which are unknown to men! Thou knowest all their aggravations! My sins, O Lord, have found me out! My fears and sorrows overwhelm me! If I look behind me, I see my wickedness pursue my soul, as an army ready to overtake me, and devour me! If I look before me, I see Thy just and dreadful judgment, and I know that Thou wilt not acquit the guilty! If I look within me, I see a dark defiled heart! If I look without me, I see a world still offering fresh temptations to deceive me! If I look above me, I see Thine offended, dreadful majesty! And if I look beneath me, I see the place of endless torment, and the company with which I deserve to suffer! I am afraid to live, and more afraid to die.

But yet when I look to Thine abundant mercy, and to Thy Son, and to Thy covenant, I have hope Thy goodness is equal to Thy greatness: Thou art love itself; and Thy mercy is over all Thy works. So wonderfully hath Thy Son condescended unto sinners, and done and suffered so much for their salvation, that if yet I should question Thy willing-

ness to forgive, I should but add to all my sins, by dishonouring that matchless mercy which Thou dost design to glorify. Yea, more, I find upon record in Thy word, that through Christ Thou hast made a covenant of grace, an act of oblivion, in which Thou hast already conditionally but freely pardoned all: granting them the forgiveness of all their sins, without any exception, whenever by unfeigned faith and repentance, they turn to Thee by Jesus Christ. And Thy present mercy doth increase my hope, in that Thou hast not cut me off, nor utterly left me to the hardness of my heart, but showest me my sin and danger before I am past remedy.

O therefore behold this prostrate sinner, who with the publican smiteth on his breast, and is ashamed to look up towards heaven. O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I confess not only my original sin, but the follies and fury of my youth, my manifold sins of ignorance and knowledge, of negligence and wilfulness; of omission and commission; against the law of nature, and against the grace and gospel of thy Son! Forgive and save me, O my God, for thy abundant mercy, and for the sacrifice and merit of thy Son, and for the promise of forgiveness which thou hast made through him: for in these alone is all my trust. Condemn me not, who condemn myself. O thou that hast opened so precious a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. Though my justice might send me presently to hell, let thy mercy triumph in my salvation. Thou hast no pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they repent and live! If my repentance be not such as thou requirest, O soften this hardened flinty heart, and give me repentance unto life!

Turn me to thyself, O God of my salvation, and cause thy face to shine upon me! Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me, Meet not this poor returning prodigal in thy wrath! but with the embracements of thy tender mercies! Cast me not away from thy presence, and sentence me not to depart from thee with the workers of iniquity! Thou who didst patiently endure me when I despised thee, refuse me not now I seek unto thee, and here in the dust implore thy mercy! Thou didst convert and pardon a wicked Manasseh, and a persecuting Saul! And there are multitudes in heaven who were once thine enemies! Glorify also thy superabounding grace in the forgiveness of my abounding sins.

I ask not for liberty to sin again, but for deliverance from this sinning nature. O give me the renewing Spirit of thy Son, to sanctify all the powers of my soul! Let me have the new and heavenly birth and nature; and the Spirit of adoption to reform me to thine image, that I may be holy as thou art holy. Illuminate me with the saving knowledge of thyself and thy Son Jesus Christ. O fill me with thy love, that my heart may be wholly set upon thee, and the remembrance of thee may be my chief delight. Let the freest and sweetest of my thoughts run after thee! and the freest and sweetest of my discourse be of thee, and of thy glory and kingdom, and of thy word and ways. O let my treasure be laid up in heaven, and there let me daily and delightfully converse. Make it the great and daily business of my devoted soul, to please thee and to honour thee, to promote thy kingdom, and to do thy will! Put thy fear into my heart that I may never depart from thee; this world hath had

too much of my heart already : let it now be crucified to me, and I to it, by the cross of Christ. Let me not love it, nor the things which are therein : but having food and raiment, cause me therewith to be content. Destroy in me all fleshly lusts ; that I may not walk after the flesh, but the Spirit. Keep me from the snares of wicked company, and from the counsel and ways of the ungodly. Bless me with the helpful communion of the saints ; and with all the means which thou hast appointed to further our sanctification and salvation. O that my ways were so directed that I might keep thy statutes ! Let me never return again to folly, nor forget the covenant of my God ! Help me to quench the first motions of sin, and to abhor all sinful desires and thoughts ; and let thy Spirit strengthen me against all temptations, that I may conquer and endure to the end. Prepare me for sufferings, and for death, and judgment, that when I must leave this sinful world, I may yield up my departing soul with joy, into the faithful hands of my dear Redeemer ! that I be not numbered with the ungodly who die in their unpardoned sin, and pass into everlasting misery ; but may be found in Christ, having the righteousness which is of God by faith ; and may attain to the resurrection of the just : that so the remembrance of the sin and miseries from which thou hast delivered me, may further my perpetual thanks and praise, to thee my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier.

And O that thou wouldst call and convert the miserable nations of idolaters and infidels ; and the multitudes of ungodly hypocrites, who have the name of Christians, and not the truth, and power, and life ! O send forth labourers into thy harvest,

and let not Satan hinder them. Prosper thy gospel and the kingdom of thy Son, that sinners may more abundantly be converted to thee, and this earth may be made more like unto heaven ; that when thou hast gathered us all into unity in Christ, we may all with perfect love and joy ascribe to thee the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FOURTH CONFERENCE.

DIRECTIONS TO THE CONVERTED AGAINST TEMPTATIONS.

PAUL. WELCOME, neighbour: how go matters with your soul?

SAUL. I thank God and my Redeemer, and you his minister, since I repented, renounced my sin, and gave up myself to my God, and Saviour, and Sanctifier, I find myself as in a new world! My hopes revive, and I have had already more comfort in believing and in seeking God, than ever I had in my life of sin, Rom. v. 1—6, 10. I am grieved and ashamed that I stood off so long, and have spent so much of my life in wickedness, and in wronging God who gave me life. I am ashamed that ever such trifles and fooleries possessed my heart, and kept me so long from a holy life! And that I delayed after I was convinced! I could wish from my very heart that I had spent all that time of my life, in beggary, slavery, or a jail, which I spent

in a fleshly sinful course. O had I not now a merciful God, a sufficient Saviour, a pardoning covenant of grace, and a comforting Sanctifier, which way should I look, or what should I do? It amazeth me to think what a dangerous state I so long lived in! O what if God had cut off my life, and taken away my unsanctified soul! What would have become of me for ever! O that I had sooner turned to my God! and sooner cast away my sins; and sooner tried a holy life! But my soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour, that he hath pitied a self-destroying sinner, and at last his mercy hath abounded where my sin did abound; Rom. v. 12, 13. to the end.

P. It is but little of his goodness, which as yet you have tasted, in comparison of what you must find at last. But that you may yet make sure work, I shall spend this day's conference in acquainting you what temptations you have yet to overcome, and what dangers to escape: for yet you have but begun your race and warfare.

S. Your counsel hath hitherto been so good, that I shall gladly hear the rest.

P. I. The first temptation that you are likely to meet with, is, a seeming difficulty and puzzling darkness in all or many of the doctrines and practices of godliness, John vi. 60, Heb. v. 11, 12, 2 Pet. iii. 16. You will think strange of many things that are taught you; and you will be alarmed at the difficulties of understanding and believing, of meditating and praying, of watching against sin, and of doing your duty. And by reason of this difficulty, Satan would make God's service seem wearisome, uncomfortable, and grievous to you, and so turn back your love from God.

And all this will be, because you are yet but as a stranger to it; like a scholar that entereth upon books and sciences, which he never meddled with before; or like an apprentice that newly learneth his trade; or like a traveller in a strange way and country. To an ignorant and unexperienced person, that never meddled with such things before, but hath been used to a contrary course of life, all things will seem strange and difficult at first.

S. What course must I take to escape this temptation?

P. 1. When you meet with any difficulty, you must still remember that it is your own dark mind, or backward heart, that is the cause; and never suspect God's word or ways. No more than a sick man will blame the meat instead of his stomach, if he loathe a feast. But take occasion to renew your repentance, and think, All this is owing to myself, I spent my youth in sin and folly, which I should have spent in hearing the word of God, and practising a godly life. What need have I now to double my labour to overcome all this!

2. Resolve to wait patiently on God in the use of all his means: and teaching, time, and use, and grace, will make all more plain, and easy, and delightful to you. Do not expect that it should come on a sudden, without time, and diligence, and patience.

3. Keep still as a humble disciple of Christ in a learning mind and way, and turn not in self-conceitedness to find fault with what you do not understand. This is the chief thing in which conversion maketh us like little children, Matt. xviii. 3. Children are conscious of their ignorance, and are teachable, and set not their wits against their teachers:

till they grow towards twenty years of age, and then they grow wise in their own conceits, and begin to think that their teachers are mistaken, and to set their wits against the truth which they should receive. But of this more presently.

II. The second temptation will be, upon these difficulties and your mistakes in religion, to grow so perplexed as to be overwhelmed with doubts and fears, and so to turn melancholy, and ready to despair.

The devil will strive to bewilder you in some mistakes; or to make you think that your conversion was not true, because you had no more brokenness of heart for sin; or because you know not just the time when you were converted: or he will make you think that all religion lieth in striving to weep and break your heart more; or that you have no grace because you have not such a lively sense of things invisible, as you have of the things that are seen: or he will tell you that now you must not think nor talk of the world, but all your thoughts and talk must be of God, and his word and holy things; and that all other is idle thoughts and talk. And that you must tie yourself to longer tasks of meditation and prayer than you have time and strength to carry on.

S. Sir, you make me wonder to hear you! Can such motions of holiness come from the devil? If I did not know you, I should suspect some carnal hatred against holiness in your speeches!

P. Why should you wonder? Did not the devil plead scripture with Christ in his temptations? Matt. iv. And doth he not transform himself into an angel of light to deceive? 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15. When he cannot keep you in security and profane-

ness, he will put on a mask of godliness. And whenever the devil will seem r eligious and righteous, he will be religious and righteous *overmuch ?*

S. What getteth he by this ? Would he make us more religious ?

P. You little know what he hopeth to get by it. Overdoing is undoing all : he would destroy all your religion by it. If you run your horse till you tire him, or break his wind, is not that the way to lose your journey ? Nothing over violent is durable. If a scholar study so hard as to crack his brains, he will never be a good scholar or wise man, till he is cured. Our souls here are united to our bodies,, and must go on that pace that the body can endure. If Satan can tempt you, into longer and deeper thinking (especially on the sadder objects in religion) than your body and brain can bear, you will grow melancholy before you are aware, and then you little know how ill a guest you have entertained.

For when once you are melancholy, you will be disabled then from secret prayer and from meditating at all : it will but confound you : you cannot bear it : and so by overdoing, you will come to do nothing of that sort of duty. And you will then have none but either wild fancies, and visions, and prophesyings, or else (more usually) sad despairing thoughts in your mind. All that you hear, and read, and see, you will think maketh against you : you will believe nothing that soundeth comfortably to you : you can think none but black and hideous thoughts. The devil will tell you a hundred times over, that you are an hypocrite and unsanctified, and all that ever you did was in hypocrisy, and that none of your sins are yet forgiven ; and that

you shall as sure be in hell as if you were there already: that God is your enemy: that Christ is no Saviour for you: that you have sinned against the Holy Ghost; or that the day of grace is past; that the Spirit is departed, and God hath forsaken you, that 'tis now too late, too late to repent and find mercy; and that you are undone forever. These black thoughts will be like a beginning of hell to you.

And it is not yourself only that will be the sufferer by this; but many of the ignorant and wicked will by seeing you, be hardened into a love of security and sensuality, and will fly from religion as a frightful thing, which doth not benefit men, but make them mad, or cast them into desperation.

S. You describe to me so sad a case, as almost makes me melancholy to hear it, and it tempts me to be afraid of religion itself, if it tend to this: but what would you have me do to escape it?

P. Religion itself as God commandeth it, tendeth not to this. It is a life of holy faith and hope and joy; but it is errors about religion that tend to it. And especially when any great cross or disappointment in the world becometh an advantage to the tempter to cast you into worldly discontents, and cares, and trouble, and perplexity of mind. This is the usual beginner of melancholy; and then it turneth to religious trouble afterward.

And I the rather tell you of it now; because you are capable, through God's mercy, of preventing it. But it is a disease which, when it seizeth on you, will disable you to think, or believe, or do any thing that much tendeth to your cure. Words are usually in vain; it overcometh the freedom of the will.

The prevention is this: 1. Set not too much by anything in the world, that so the losing of it may not be able to reach your heart. Take the world as nothing, and it can do nothing with you. Take it for dung, and the loss of it will not trouble you.

2. Keep true apprehensions of the nature of religion: that it lieth in faith, hope, and love, in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17. 1 Cor. xii. 31, and xiii. 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18, in the forethoughts of everlasting glory and in comforting yourself and your Christian friends with remembering that you shall for ever be with the Lord; in thanksgiving to your bountiful God, and in his joyful praises. Let these be your thoughts, your speeches, your exercises, publicly and secretly. Set yourself more to the daily exercise of Divine praises and thanksgiving, to stir up love and joy, than to any other part of duty. Not that you have done repenting; but that these are the chief, the life, the top, the end of all the rest.

3. When you feel any scruples or troubles begin to seize upon you, open them presently to a judicious minister or friend, before they fasten and take rooting in you. Remember and observe these things.

III. A third temptation that will assault you will be to be in continual doubt of your own sincerity: so that though you be not melancholy before, Satan would bring you to it, by a life of continual doubts and fears.

And here he hath very great advantage: because man's heart is so dark and deceitful, and because our grace is usually very little and weak: and a little is hardly discerned from none; and because

that the greatest assurance of sincerity is a work that requireth much skill, great diligence, and clear helps.

S. I easily believe that this will be my case. I feel some beginnings of it already: but what would you advise me to do to guard against it?

[P. 1. On such occasions instead of puzzling and wearying yourself with the inquiry whether you have been sincere or not, it will be well for you to resolve to yield yourself up to God afresh, to exercise faith in Christ, and say with yourself, "I will look to him for life and salvation now, though I may never have done so yet; and I consent to take God for my God henceforth, though I may have served him formally and deceitfully hitherto."]

2. But because he that consenteth to learn will learn, and he he that consenteth to obey will obey, (Tit. i. 16. James ii. 14, &c. Matt. xxi. 28—32.) your life must also testify the truth of your consent. Therefore instead of over-tedious trying and fearing whether you truly consent and obey or not, set yourself heartily to your duty; study to please God, and to live fruitfully in good works: resolve more against those sins which make you question your sincerity: and the practice of a godly life, and the increase of your grace, will be a constant manifest evidence, and you will have the witness in yourself that you are a son of God.

S. I thank you for this short and full direction. I pray go on to the next temptation.

P. IV. If you escape these sadder thoughts, Satan will tempt you to security, and tell you that now you are converted, all is sure, and you never need to fear any more: those that have true grace can never lose it; and sins once pardoned are never

unpardoned again ; and therefore now all your danger is past. And if he can thus take off all your fear and care, he will quickly take off your zeal and diligence.

S. Why ! Is not all my fear and danger past ?

P. No, not as long as you are on earth ; tormenting fear you must resist ; but preventing fear, and repenting fear will be still your duty, Heb. iv. 1. xii. 1, 2. You are but entered into the holy war. You have many a temptation yet to resist and conquer ; temptations from Satan, and from men, and from your flesh ; temptations of prosperity and adversity. You have constant and various duties to perform, which require strength, and skill, and willingness. You have remaining corruptions yet to mortify, which will be striving to break out again, and to undo you. You know not how many burdens you have to bear, where flesh and heart and friends may fail you. I tell you all the rest of your life must be the practice of what you have already promised to God. A labour, a race, a warfare : and you must defend yourself with one hand as it were, while you build with the other ; and all the way to heaven must, step by step, be carried on by labour and victory jointly. Will you reward a man merely for promising to serve you ? Will you excuse a soldier from fighting and watching, because he is enlisted, and engaged to do it ? The two first articles of religion are, that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. If you receive the unmovable kingdom, you must serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, as knowing that our God is a consuming fire, Heb. xii. 28, 29. And though it be God that giveth you to will and to do, you must work out your

salvation with fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12, 13. You must be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58. 1 Tim. iv. 8, as knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. You must fight a good fight, and finish your course, and love the appearing of Jesus Christ, if you will expect the crown of righteousness. You must overcome if you would inherit, and be faithful to the death if you would receive the crown of life, Rev. ii., iii. Do you think that you come unto Christ's army, vineyard, and family to be careless?

S. But if I cannot fall from grace, nor be unjustified, may it not be said that there is no danger, nor cause for fear?

P. Questions of that kind are not yet fit for your head; much less to build security upon: it is certain that God's grace will not forsake you, if you forsake it not first, Josh. xxiv. 16, 20. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. 2 Chron. xv. 2. Isa. i. 28. Jer. xvii. 13. Matt. xxiv. 24. Rom. viii. 21, 29, 30. And it is certain that none of his elect shall fall away and perish. But this is enough to the present case; that as you have no cause to distrust God, so it is certain that God doth not decree to save men without danger, but to save them from danger; and that your fear and care to escape that danger (of sin and misery) is the means decreed and commanded for your escape; "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it," Heb. iv. 1. The sum of all is instanced in Heb. xi. 7. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the

world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Go on therefore with faith, and hope, and joy, but think not that all the danger is past, till you are in heaven.

V. The most dangerous temptation of all will be, the stirring up the remnants of your own corruption, of sensuality, and pride and covetousness, to draw you back to your former pleasant sins; especially by appetite, and fleshly lust.

If you by addicted to your appetite, though you be poor, you will not want a bait; especially to excess of drinking. And the tempter will tell you, that because you fare hardly and have small drink at home, you may lawfully comfort your heart with an extra cup abroad. And so from one cup to two, and so to three, you shall be tempted on, till your appetite becomes your master, and your love to the drink doth become so strong, that you cannot easily restrain it.

S. God forbid that ever I should again become a swine!

P. If you should but once be overtaken with this sin, you are in great danger of committing it again and again; for the remembrance of the pleasure will be a continual temptation to you; and when Satan hath deceived any man into sin, usually God leaveth that man proportionably to his power, and he gets that advantage, of which he is very hardly dispossessed: as he ruleth by deceiving, so where he hath deceived once, he hath double advantage to deceive again.

And then, I will fortell you, besides the danger of damnation, and the odious ingratitude to your Saviour, &c., you will live in a kind of hell on earth; the devil and the flesh will draw you one

way, and God's Spirit and your conscience will draw you another way. The terrors of God will be upon you, and no sooner will the pleasure of your sin be over, but conscience will be God's executioner upon you, and some sparks of hell will fall upon it; so that you will think that the devil is ready to fetch you: unless, you sin yourself into stupidity, and then you are undone forever.

S. I pray you tell me how to prevent such a misery.

P. Be not confident of your own strength: keep away from the tavern and alehouse: come not within the doors, except in cases of true necessity: keep out of the company of tipplers and drunkards. Let not the tempting cup be in your sight, Matt. vi. 13, xxvi. 41; Luke viii. 13, or if you be unwillingly cast upon temptation, let holy fear renew your resolution.

And so as to the case of fleshly lusts; if your bodily temper be addicted to it, as you love your soul, keep at a sufficient distance from the bait. If you feel your fancy begin to be infected towards any person, whose comeliness enticeth you, be sure that you never be with them alone without necessity, and that you never be guilty of any immodest looks, or touch, or words; but keep at such a distance that it may be almost impossible for you to sin. You little know what you have done, when you have first broken the bounds of modesty. If the devil here get in a foot, he will not easily be got out, but will tempt you again and again to the same sin. And next, the flames of hell will be hotter in your conscience, than the flames of lust were in your flesh; and if God do not give you up to hardness of heart, and utterly forsake you, you will have no rest till

you return from sin to God: which, if you be so happy as to do, you little think how dear it may cost you; what terrors! what heart-breaking! and, perhaps, a sad and disconsolate life even to your death.

And you will not suffer alone; O what a grief it will be to all the godly that know or hear of you! 2 Cor. ii. 4. xii. 21. What a reproach to religion! what a hardening to the wicked, to make them hate religion to their damnation!

S. You make me tremble to hear of such a horrid state. I entreat you, therefore, to tell me how I may avoid the danger of which you speak.

P. It will help very much to keep you safe if you are careful not to be idle in mind or body. You, that are a poor labourer, are in tenfold less danger than rich men and gentlemen are. When a man is idle, the devil findeth him at leisure for evil thoughts and desires. But if you will labour hard in your calling from morning till night, so that your business may necessarily take up your thoughts, and also weary and employ your body, you will neither have mind nor time for this sin.

[You will be tempted also to pride and worldliness, to thirst after riches for yourself, or for your children after you. But, above all, perhaps your heart will be inclined to murmurings and discontent when you see many faring so much better than yourself in the good things of this life, while you have to work hard for food and raiment. To overcome this temptation, you should think that though God has not given you riches, he has given you what is a thousand times better, if you have his favour, and the salvation of Christ, and the help and comfort of the Spirit for your portion. Learn to love such

treasures as these, and then you will find that you can do very well without carnal delights, and worldly plenty.]

S. Proceed, I pray you, to the other temptations.

P. VI. The controversies and differences which you will hear about religion, and the many sects, and parties, and divisions you will meet with, together with their speeches and usage of one another, will be a great temptation to you.

You will hear some on one side and some on the other, hotly contending about predestination, and providence, and universal redemption, and free will, and man's merits, and in what sense Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, and about justification, and the law, and the covenants of works and of grace; and of the nature of faith and repentance; of assurance of salvation, and whether any fall away from grace, with many such like.

Some persons on one side will tell you that if you turn not to their opinions, you are a legalist and a stranger to free grace, and set up a righteousness of Christ. Others again will say, that if you are against them, you make God tyrannical and the author of sin. Thus you will be tempted to think there is no certainty at all in religion, and that there are as many religions in the world as there are sects and divisions.

S. You greatly perplex me to hear such unexpected things as these: what then shall I do if I come to see them, and should be thus assaulted? Is religion no plainer and surer a way? or are christians no wiser and better people, than to live in such uncertainties, contentions, and confusions? I thought that their warfare had been only against the world, the flesh and the devil: Do they live in such a war

against each other? I am almost utterly discouraged to hear of such a war as you describe.

P. I had rather you knew it beforehand that you may be prepared for it, than to be overthrown hereafter by an unexpected surprise. [The truths of religion, you must know, are not doubtful and uncertain; though on many points connected with religion there are various opinions among men.] Is not all plain sure which I have explained to you? All that is necessary, all without which a man cannot be a good and holy christian, is plain and easy. Repent and believe, love God above all, and heaven above earth, and your neighbours as yourself; mortify the lusts of the flesh, and deny yourself, and suffer patiently, and forgive your enemies; all these things, depend upon it, are easy enough to understand, though hard and difficult to be practised.

Besides, among those that are sincerely devoted to God there are abundance of imperfections. Some are yet young and inexperienced in Divine things; others think too much of themselves, of their understandings or attainments, and so determine rashly and speak confidently, when they should be diligent and humble learners.

You will be apt at your first conversion to think that true christians are nearer to perfection than they are; as if the godly had nothing but godliness in them: but when you have tried them longer, you will find, that grace is weak; and men's faults are many, and very stiff, and hardly cured; and your over high estimation of the best, may, by experience, receive a check; and you will see that men are still but men.

S. But I shall never be able to keep up that fervent love to the brethren which is my duty, if I find

them as bad as you describe them. It will tempt me to think that grace itself is less excellent than I thought it, if it do no more, and make men no better. I feel already your very discourse abate my great estimation of religious persons. What then will such experience do?

P. If your estimation be erroneous, and you think them more perfect than they are, the abatement of it is your duty. For God would not have us judge falsely of them; nor ground our love to them upon mistake. But the excellency of holiness, and the true worth of the godly, may be discerned through all these troublesome faults. The use that you must make of all this, is such as followeth.

1. You must consider how great God's mercy is to man that will bear with so much faultiness in the best, Matt. xviii. 32. Exod. xxxiv. 7. Col. iii. 13. Psa. ciii. 3. Eph. iv. 32. and how tender a physician we have who endureth all these stinking corruptions, which we can scarcely endure in one another, and the humble can scarcely endure in themselves.

2. What constant need we have of a Saviour and a Sanctifier, 1 John i. 9. Eph. v. 26. and how much we must still live upon the healing grace of Christ.

3. How bad our case was before conversion, when it is so bad still: and what wretches we should have been if God had left us to ourselves: and what church troublers the ungodly are, when the better sort have such troublesome faults.

4. What an excellent thing grace is, that doth not only keep alive under so much sin, but daily works it out, till at last it perfectly overcomes it.

5. How tender we must be of judging one another to be ungodly, for such faults as are too common

among some of the penitent. Gal. vi. 1—3. Matt. vii. 1—5. Though sin be never the better, because we are all so bad, yet we are the unfitter to be hasty censurers of one another.

6. It is a help to the hope and comfort of a penitent burdened sinner, that yet Christ will pardon him and heal him at the last, 1 John ii. 1, 2. when he sees how much God beareth with and pardoneth in all. As it is a comfort to the sick man, to hear that thousands do live that have had the same disease. If almost all God's servants were perfect, it would be hard for the imperfect to believe that they are his servants, 1 John i. 7—9.

7. It showeth you what need we have to bear with one another, if ever we will have love and peace: and what a self-condemning course it is of persecutors, to ruin the godly upon an accusation of some tolerable error or fault, when all men have such like, Matt. xviii. 32. John viii. 6—8.

8. It will tell you how little cause any of us have to be proud, Isa. lvx. 5. and how needful humility and renewed repentance is, to those that are still so bad, Matt. xviii. 3. xi. 28, 29.

9. It will tell you how little reason we have to be secure and idle, and to think that our mortifying work is done, when still we have all so much sin to overcome, Heb. xii. 28, 29. Phil. ii. 12.

10. It will keep us from too contemptuous and unmerciful carriage towards those that are unconverted, or that are lapsed into sin; and teach us to pity them, and pray for them, rather than revile them, when we find so much faultiness among the better sort of christians.

11. It will make those few christians the more

amiable in your eyes, whose great wisdom, piety, sobriety, peaceableness, and patience, not only keep them from joining with the church troublers, but also maketh them both the supporters and healers of the rest, Phil. ii. 20, 21. For through God's great mercy many such judicious, wise, humble, blameless, charitable, and peaceable men there are, who are to the ordinary weak professors, what the healthful are, in an hospital or family, to the sick, and the aged to the children; that bear with the rest, and help to cure them by degrees, and keep the peace which they would break, and reconcile the differences which others make, and rid out of the church the abominations of reviling, and hatred, and divisions wherewith the others do defile it. And blessed are these peace-makers, Matt. v. 9. who have the pure and peaceable wisdom from above, James iii. 17. for they are eminently the children of God.

12. Lastly. This must teach you to remember the difference between earth and heaven, and to look up with honour and desire to the perfect harmony of holy souls, united in one flame of love to God; and to say, Come Lord Jesus! When shall I be in that peaceable perfect world, where no ignorance, no sin, no pride, no passion, no carnal domination troubleth the holy triumphant church? And it must quicken your prayers, that God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven. These are the true uses to be made of all our differences, contentions, scandals, persecutions and church divisions.

S. O how great a mercy is a wise and seasonable monitor and guide! I was ready to think the scandal described to be so great, as might even warrant the abatement of my liking of godly men, if not of godliness itself! And you have showed me abund-

ance of fruitful uses to be made of it; and that with undeniable evidence of reason!

P. To think ill of Christ or Christianity, of God or godliness, for the errors or faults of any man in the world, is a mad and a most unfair thing. For what is all sinfulness but a want of godliness, or that which is its contrary? And will you vilify health because many are sick? or ease because many have pain? or life because many die? or light because many are blind or in darkness? When, on the contrary, it is pain and sickness that best teacheth men to value ease and health. And should not the sinful confusions in the world then, and the miscarriages of christians, cause us to value wisdom, holiness, and peace the more? It is not godliness, but the want of more godliness that maketh men do all this amiss. There is nothing in the world, but more wisdom and more true godliness that can cure it. And when there is none, the world is so much worse that it is almost like hell.

S. But could not God make men better, and cure all this if he would? Why then is the world so bad?

P. God, who in himself is infinitely good, in his infinite wisdom seeth it best, to make his creatures in great variety, and not to communicate the same degrees of excellency to them all. As you see that every star is not a sun, nor all stars equal, nor the clouds like the stars, nor the earth and water so pure as the air, nor so active as the fire; as you see a difference between men, and beasts, and birds, and worms, and trees, and plants, and stones, in wonderful variety.

Now it is true that God could make every man an angel, and every wicked man a saint. But it

pleaseth him to do otherwise, and it does not become us to inquire into his reasons.

S. VII. You have brought to my mind and almost here answered already, another temptation which I have sometimes felt myself. It hath posed me to think that God who is so good, should make hell for any, and damn men to such torments as I would not have my greatest enemy feel; much more that the far greatest part of the world should all be damned. For if scripture had never said that few are saved; yet as long as it saith that none but the holy and obedient are saved, it is all one: for I see that very few are holy; few love God, and his word, and heaven above this world. Upon these thoughts I have sometimes been tempted to doubt whether God be good and merciful; and sometimes to doubt whether the scripture that saith these things be true.

P. That you may understand these matters well, you must begin at the bottom with the clearest certainties, and so proceed to the rest. [It is quite certain that God is holy, just and good; and it is certain, too, that the scriptures which tell us that he will punish the wicked and impenitent with damnation are his word. If it appears a mystery to us that so many should seem to have no prospect in the next world but misery, we should remember that we are very ignorant, and short-sighted, and have no right to expect that we should thoroughly understand the dealings of the great God.

But who is it after all that sends sinners to hell? Is it God, who warns and entreats them to flee from the wrath to come, and invites them by his word and ministers to seek his mercy, and who has given up his son to die for them that they may be saved,

and be holy and happy for ever? Or is it their own evil hearts, and worldly, sensual natures which make them love sin too dearly to part with it, and send them against God and his laws, and make them deaf to his voice when he calls them to repentance? Must God go back from his word, and take hardened, ungodly rebels to heaven, because they would not repent and care for their souls, and take salvation when it was offered them?

Besides, do we not see that human government is necessary to the peace and order of the world? and should we not say that he was a bad king, or an unjust judge who should let thieves, and murderers, and seditious, turbulent men go about at large? And shall we find fault then with God, who is the sovereign Lord and Judge of all men for executing punishment upon those who have transgressed his laws, and who would not come and submit themselves to him when he gave them opportunity, as he does in the gospel?]

S. You have silenced my murmuring thoughts as to the being of hell: but what say you of the numbers that are damned?

P. Remember that none are damned but those that wilfully damn themselves, and refuse salvation. Consider that man is as nothing to God, and therefore there is no reason that he should spare sinners for their number's sake, when the number only maketh the sin the greater.

Besides, do you not know that this earth is no bigger in comparison of the whole creation than one inch of ground is to all the earth? And are not all the rest of the vast and glorious parts of the world as likely to be fully inhabited as this? And how do you know that those immeasurable regions have not

a thousand, thousand millions of blessed angels for one wicked man or devil that is damned!

S. I see that it is unfit for poor dark sinners to judge the Judge of all the world, or to presume to quarrel with his judgments, when we know no better what we say.

P. The uses which you should rather make of the numbers that are condemned are such as these.

1. To consider how mad a creature an ungodly man is, when so great a number will by no warnings be kept from ruining their own souls for ever.

2. That man hath exceeding need of a Saviour and a Sanctifier, who is such a pernicious enemy to himself.

3. How much you are beholden to God, who hath made you by his grace to be one of those few that shall be saved.

4. How foolish and unsafe it is to think, and speak, and do as the most do, unless you would speed as the most do for ever. And how unmeet it is for them to be conformed to this world, who hope to be for ever separated from them.

5. How excellent a people those few should be, above the common rates of men, whom God hath called out of so great a number to himself. How fervently should they love him, and how holily and heartily should they serve him!

S. O that we could be such as this mercy doth deserve! But, sir, the chief matter is yet behind: you have told me before of the scandals, errors, and sects, and temptations by them, which will be in the church; and you have told me now, of the multitudes that are wicked; but you have not told me, how I may escape either of these temptations? What shall such an ignorant sinner as I do, when I

not only see the ill example of the multitude high and low, but also hear men that seemed learned and godly, condemning one another.

P. I will remind you, that all this is no more than Christ foretold us of, and warned all his disciples to prepare for. That "false Christs and false prophets should arise, who should deceive, were it possible, the very elect," Matt. xxiv. 24. "When they say, Here is Christ, and there is Christ, go not after them," ver. 26. That "of our own-selves men should arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them," Acts xx. 30. That "it must be that heresies must arise, that they which are approved may be made manifest," 1 Cor. xi. 19. That "Satan would transform himself into an angel of light, and his ministers into ministers of righteousness to deceive," 2 Cor. xi. 14. That some would "cause divisions and offences contrary to the" apostle's "doctrine; even such as serve the Lord Jesus, but their own bellies, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple," Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Among the Corinthians how quickly did the more carnal sort of Christians fall into factions and divisions, some being of Paul, and some of Apollos, and some of Cephas! And the Galatians so followed the Jewish teachers, that Paul was afraid of them, lest he had laboured in vain. And in many of the churches, the Nicolaitanes and deceivers (called the woman Jezebel) did teach and seduce the people from the truth, Rev. ii. and iii.

But your safety in this great danger must be thus maintained.

1. Adhere to those truths wherein all christians are agreed: [that is, all who have the Spirit of Christ, and lead a sober, godly, self-denying life, and

are of a serious, humble, loving temper, and whose conversation savours of heavenly things.]

2. Be sure that you love and faithfully practice these truths, and be careful to order your walk according to them. Then the very love and practice of them will help you to such a lively, and experimental kind of knowledge as will certainly keep you from all damning error; and moreover God will give you more light, [so that you will find the truth of that gracious promise of Christ, "if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."]

3. Learn all that you yet understand not, in the same humble teachableness from the ministers of Christ in which you first entered into his church, Matt. xviii. 3. Think not that you are grown too wise to need their further teaching, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 7. 17. 24. When you once grow proud of your own understanding, and think that you can judge of all things at the first hearing, and that all is false which crosseth your first conceits, and that ministers can add but little to what you know already, then you are as bad as perverted already: for this is the root of a multitude of errors.

4. Pray earnestly to God to preserve you from error: and when conscience and experience tell you that any opinion or party would lead you to plain sin, (as to dishonour your superiors, to favour persecution or idolatry, to divide christians, and set them against each other, to destroy christian love, to favour loose and fleshy living, to neglect God's ordinances, or the like,) be sure so far it must needs be false.

5. Wait still as a doubting learner, where you cannot yet reach to a Divine belief.

If you understand but these two lines, it will help you to escape all the chief perplexities of mind, which all our sects would draw you into.

S. [I thank you for these directions, which I hope will keep me from being bewildered and confounded with the multitude of opinions.]

P. VIII. The eighth temptation which I must forewarn you of, is this: you will be in danger to mistake the nature of the christian religion, by minding only some parts of it, and overlooking the rest, and prehaps the greatest, and taking up with the separated parts alone.

God's word is large, and man's mind is narrow: and we are apt when we observe something, to think that it is all. So some are so intent on duty, that they have poor thoughts of grace and mercy. And some think that the magnifying of grace, obligeth them to villify inherent holiness, and performed duty. And nothing is now more common than to set truth against truth, and duty against duty; when they are such as God conjoineth. But the instance that I will now warn you of is this: The true nature of religion is nothing else, but faith turning the soul by repentance from the flesh and world, to the love, and praise, and obedience of God, in the joyful hope of the heavenly glory. Read this over and over again. Now the too common case of christian is, to live so much in the use of mere self-love and fear, as that almost all the notable exercise of their religion is but a timorous care to be saved; and an inquiring after marks, or other ways by which they may know that they shall be saved; and a performing of duty as a heavy but necessary task, that they may be saved. But that which you must aim at is, to study much God's wondrous love in Christ, and

the certainty and greatness of the heavenly glory; and so far to mourn for sin as it tendeth to magnify grace, and to cleanse and preserve the heart and life; and to live in the constant delights of Divine love, and joyful thanksgiving, and praises to our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and in the belief and hopes of life everlasting; and out of love to God and man, to delight in constant obedience to God, and in doing all the good that we can do in the world; and in this way to trust God quietly and gladly with body and soul.

This is true religion: and weeping for sin, and particular ordinances must not be neglected, but esteemed only as lower parts, which are but stepping stones to this ascent, and never to be set against it, nor our chief care to be spent upon them.

S. I thank you for this warning: for I perceive by this that true religion is a very noble and a pleasant life. But most good people that I have known do but ask what they shall do to be saved, and beg for a softer heart that can weep for sin, and keep on in hearing, prayer, and sacraments. And the praises of God do take up but a little room in their devotions, except some that do it by way of erroneous opposition to humiliation and confession of sin. And Divine love, and the joys of faith, and hope, and holiness, are little seen.

P. IX. Your next and sore temptation will be, to abate your zeal and diligence by degrees, and to grow to a customaay coldness and formality, and lose all the life of your religion, Rev. ii. 4, 5. iii. 15, 16. Matt. xxiv. 12. All your spiritual vigour will die away, if you be not careful to prevent it.

S. What would you have me do to prevent it?

P. 1. Let your first and chief labour be every day

about your heart: stir up your soul when you find it sluggish. Learn how to preach to it in your meditations; and to chide it, and urge it to its work, Psa. xlii. 5. 11. xliii. 5.

2. Live under the liveliest ministry, and in the most serious christian company you can get: or if that may not be, supply that want by reading the most lively serious books.

3. Take heed of turning your religion and zeal to opinions and parties instead of the life and practice of faith, hope, and love. For a wrangling, contentious zeal, is as destructive of true holy zeal, as a fever is of natural heat and life.

4. Take heed of growing in love with the world: for as the thoughts of riches and rising grow sweet to you, the thoughts of God and heaven will grow lifeless and unpleasant.

5. Take heed of sinning wilfully: for all such sin doth harden the heart, and forfeit the quickening help of the Spirit.

6. Hold on in the use of all God's ordinances: for intermissions and inconstancy tend to a total neglect; and a contented course of lifeless duty, tendeth to spiritual death itself.

P. X. Your next temptation is the most dreadful of all. You may be tempted at last to doubt whether the scripture be the word of God, and whether Christ be indeed the Son of God, and whether there be a heaven, and hell, and immortality of the soul. And this may befall you. 1. Either by the company or books of infidels or atheists, who prate against the scripture, and the life to come: 2. Or else by the malicious suggestions of Satan, stirring up in you unbelieving thoughts. 3. But especially in case of melancholy, which is a disease of the body

which giveth him great advantage to molest the mind with blasphemous temptations: so that he will draw you to doubt whether there be a God, or whether he be the Governor of the world, or whether Christ be true, or scripture be God's word. And here he will set before you the texts which you understand not, and persuade you that they are contradictory, and ask you, Is it likely that this or this should be true? And thus will your very foundation be assaulted. And the consequence may be either very troublesome or very dangerous to you. If you do abhor these suggestions, it will be a torment to you, to be followed with such horrid motions: though as long as you abhor them, they will not condemn you. But if you patiently hearken to them, then your danger will be great.

S. I pray you open the danger to me, that I may the more dread it, and avoid it.

P. If God do not by his grace stir up your soul to detest and cast away such thoughts, or show you by his light the falseness of them, they may bring you to atheism or infidelity itself; and your latter end will be worse than your beginning.

S. I pray you tell me then, how I must be established against all temptations to unbelief, and how I must prove the truth of Christ, and the gospel to be indeed the word of God, so that I may stand fast against the most subtle reasonings of unbelievers, and may trust God's word, to the forsaking of life and all.

P. [To do this fully would require a long discourse and many learned men have written well and largely upon it, so that infidels have not been able to reply to them otherwise than by their profane scoffings. But I will just give you one or two directions which

may prove a safeguard to you in the hour of danger, and prevent you, by the blessing of God, from being carried away by the reasonings of ungodly men.

I. Let the bible be as the anchor of your soul to hold you fast when the enemy would unsettle your faith. If unbelievers try to persuade you that it is not the word of God, tell them that you find a Divine power in it which proves to your soul better than a thousand arguments that it was written by the Holy Spirit. Besides this, ask yourself whether the religion which it describes is not just what your soul needs, offering you both pardon for sin, and grace to set you free from sin; providing you with consolation under all the trials of life, and setting before you the sure prospect of blessedness and glory hereafter.

II. Mark the characters of the men who are enemies to Christianity, and compare them with the holiest and most godly men you know. If the *one* set are proud and selfish, fond of indulging the lusts of the flesh, violent and overbearing towards their fellow men, discontented and unruly subjects, and without any serious thoughts respecting God and the other world; while you see the others (Christians, I mean, and men who believe and love the Bible) meek and patient, full of love and tenderness, ready to do their neighbours a kindness, though it costs them labours and sacrifices, and having the fear of God before their eyes, so that they dread sin more than pain or any worldly loss; then it will not be difficult for you to determine whose religion is most likely to come from God]

III. Remember that it is said in the Bible, "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." All that are saved are made partakers of the Spirit of holiness, which quickeneth them to God as from the

dead, and enableth them to overcome the world and the flesh, and to forsake their dearest sins, and maketh them to love God above all. None but God can thus regenerate souls, and God would not do it by a doctrine which is false. You see, then, how the weakest may prove Christ and His Gospel to be true, and may stand fast against all the assaults of the devil, even by the great and evident witness of the Holy Spirit.

S. The Lord help me to understand and remember it! I perceive by this, that it greatly concerneth all Christ's servants to cherish and obey the Spirit, and to grow in grace, and live very holy and heavenly, and especially loving and fruitful lives, when their holiness is to be the standing witness for Christ and the gospel to the world, from age to age; and that the sins of Christians are a greater wrong to Christ than ever I before imagined.

P. I will give you one proof of that from the words of Christ himself—John xvii. 21—23. Christ prayeth for them that shall believe on Him by the word, "that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

I will now conclude with these five graces and duties, which must be your general helps against all temptations whatsoever.

1. You must grow in holy knowledge, 1 Pet. ii 2. 2 Pet. iii. 18. 2 Thess. i. 3. Eph. i. 17, 18.

Phil. i. 9. Col. i. 9. iii. 10. Prov. xiv. 16 Children and fools are more easily cheated than the wise.

2. You must come to a full resolution. Resolve rather to die than wilfully sin. An unresolved person encourageth the tempter, and is more than half overcome already.

3. Be fearful of sinning, as conscious of your badness, and the multitude of temptations: and let watchfulness be your constant work.

4. Be sure that your heart and life be wholly given up to God, and filled with good, and still employed in his service: and then the tempter will never find you disposed or at leisure for his turn. An empty heart, much more carnal and an idle life, is ready to entertain any motion unto sin

5. Look still by faith to Christ and his Spirit as your only strength. And trust not to your own understanding, goodness or resolutions; for man of himself is very mutable. The Lord that hath converted you, confirm you and preserve you.

THE FIFTH CONFERENCE.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR A HOLY LIFE.

PAUL. Come, neighbour, methinks by this time you should so well understand your own condition, as to know yourself what further instructions to desire. What would you have me teach you next ?

SAUL. You have already made known to me what is the nature of your christianity and holiness, and what are the temptations which must be resisted. And I truly approve your wisdom in rather acquainting me with them beforehand that I may be prepared or may prevent them, than (as many do) to stay till I come to you in a temptation for resolution to help me out ; for I know it is easier and cheaper to prevent the kindling of this fire, than to quench it. And sometimes it falls among stubble or gunpowder and hath done its work before the sinner cometh to a minister for help. They are strange physicians who choose rather to cure diseases at the height, than to teach men how to prevent them. But I would yet entreat you to give me in writing some distinct instructions for a holy life.

P. Your request is a most reasonable one,—all is not done when men have begun a religious life, Col. i. 23 ; Heb. iv. 1 ; 2 Pet. ii. 20 ; 1 Cor. iii. ; Gal. iii and iv. Matt. xiii ; 41. xviii ; 7. All trees that blossom prove not fruitful ; and all fruit comes not to perfection. Many fall off, who seem-

ed to have good beginnings : and many dishonour the name of Christ, by their scandals and infirmities. Many do grieve their teachers' hearts, and lamentably disturb the church of Christ by their ignorance, errors, self-conceitedness, unruliness, contentiousness, and divisions. Insomuch that the scandals and the quarrels of christians, are the great impediments of the conversion of the infidel and heathen world, Phil. iii. 18, 19. Acts xx. 30. by exposing christianity to their contempt and scorn, as if it were but the error of men as unholy and worldly and proud as others, that can never agree among themselves ; and many by their passions and selfishness are a trouble to the families and neighbours where they live : and more by their weaknesses and great distempers, are snares, vexations, and burdens to themselves. Whereas christianity in its true constitution, is a life of such holy light and love, such purity and peace, such fruitfulness and heavenliness, Matt. v. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 1 ; ii. 15; i. 8 ; 2 Cor. i. 12 ; as, if it were accordingly showed forth in the lives of christians, would command admiration and reverence from the world, and do more to their conversion, than swords, or words alone can do : and it would make christians useful and amiable to each other ; and their lives a feast and pleasure to themselves. I hope it may prove some help to these excellent ends, and to the securing men's salvation, if in a few sound experienced directions, I open to you the duties of a christian life.

I. Keep still the true form of christian doctrine, desire, and duty orderly printed on your minds, 2 Tim. i.. 13. iii. 7. Heb. v. 12. Phil. i. 9. Rom. xv. 14, that is, understand it clearly and distinctly, and remember it. I mean the great points of religion,

which are admitted and received by all real christians. Such solid knowledge will establish you against seduction and unbelief, Eph. iv. 13, 14. Col. i. 9. ii. 3. iii. 10. 1 Tim. vi. 4. and will be still within you a ready help for every grace, and every duty, as the skill of an artificer is for his work. And for want of this, when you come among infidels or heretics, their reasonings may seem unanswerable to you, and shake, if not overthrow your faith; and you will easily err in lesser points, and trouble the church with your dreams and wranglings.

II. Live daily by faith on Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and you, John xvii. 3. Eph. iii. 17, 18. Matt, xxviii. 19. Eph. i. 22, 23. iv. 6. 16. Rom. v. 2 Cor. xii. 9. John xvi. 33. 1 John v. 4. Heb. iv. 14, 16. Col. iii. 3, 4. Acts vii. 59. Being well grounded in the belief of the gospel, and understanding Christ's office, make use of him still in all your wants. Think on the fatherly love of God as coming to you through him alone; and of the Spirit as given by him, your Head, and of the covenant of grace as enacted and sealed by him; and of the ministry as sent by him; and of all time, and helps, and hope as procured and given by him. When you think of sin, and infirmity, and temptations, think also of his sufficient pardoning, justifying, and victorious grace. When you think of the world, the flesh, and the devil, think how he overcometh them. Let his doctrine and the pattern of his most perfect life, be always before you as your rule. In all your doubts, and fears, and wants, go to him in the Spirit, and to the Father by him, and him alone. Take him as the root of your life and mercies, and live as upon him and by his life. And when you die, resign your souls to him, that you may be with him

where he is, and see his glory. To live on Christ, and use him in every want and address to God, is more than a general confused believing in him.

III. So believe in the Holy Ghost, as to live and work by him, as the body doth by the soul, Gal. v. 16. 25. You are not baptized into his name in vain, Matt. xxviii. 19. But too few understand the sense and reason of it. The Spirit is sent by Christ for two great works: 1. To the apostles and prophets to inspire them infallibly to preach the gospel, and confirm it by miracles, and leave it on record, for following ages, in the holy scriptures, John xvi. 13. Heb. ii. 3, 4. 2. To all his members, to illuminate and sanctify them, to believe and obey this sacred doctrine, (beside his common gift to many who understand and preach it,) 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. Rom. viii. 9. 13. John iii. 5, 6. The spirit having first indited the gospel, doth, by it, first regenerate, and afterwards govern all true believers. He is not now given us, for the revealing of new doctrines, but to understand and obey the doctrine revealed and sealed by him long ago, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Jude 19, 20. As the sun doth by its sweet and secret influence cherish the life of natural things; so doth Christ by his Spirit our spiritual life, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Isa. xliv. 3. Rom. viii. 1. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Zech. xiv. 20. As you do no work by your natural life, you should do none but by your spiritual life: you must not only believe, and love, and pray by it; but manage all your calling by it; for "Holiness to the Lord" must be written upon all; all things are sanctified to you, because you, being sanctified to God, devote all to him, and use all for him; and therefore must do all in the strength and conduct of the Spirit.

IV. Live wholly upon God, as all in all, 1 Cor. x. 31. Rom. xi. 36. 2 Cor. v. 7, 8. 1 John iii. 1. Rom. v. 1—3. Matt. xxii. 37. Eph. i. 6. 2 Cor. v. 19. Gal. iv. 4—6. Let faith, hope, and love be daily feeding on him. Let our Father which art in heaven be first inscribed on your hearts, that he may seem most amiable to you, and you may boldy trust him, and filial love may be the spring of duty. Make use of the Son and Spirit to lead you to the Father; and of faith in Christ to kindle and keep alive the love of God. Let it be your principal end in studying Christ, to see the goodness, love, and amiableness of God in him: a condemning God is not so easily loved as a gracious reconciled God. You have so much of the Spirit, as you have love to God. This is the proper gift of the Spirit to all the adopted sons of God, to cause them, with filial affection and dependence, to cry, Abba, Father. Know not, desire not, love not any creature, but purely as subordinate to God; without him let it be nothing to you; but as the glass without the face, or scattered letters without the sense; or as the corpse without the soul. Call nothing prosperity or pleasure but his love, Psa. xxx. 5. lxiii. 3. and nothing adversity or misery, but his displeasure, and the cause and fruits of it. When any thing would seem lovely and desirable which is against him, count it loss, Phil. iii. 7, 8. And look upon that man who would entice you from his love, or frighten you from your duty to him, as one that would destroy your soul. Fear him much, but love him more! let love be the soul and end of every other duty, 2 Thess. iii. 5. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Place not your religion in anything but the love of God with its means and fruits.

V. Live in the belief and hopes of heaven, seek

it as your inheritance and the end of all your labors; and daily delight your souls in the forethoughts of the endless sight and love of God, Col. iii. 1, 2, 4. Matt. vi. 19—21. 33. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. v. 7. Luke xii. 20. Heb, vi. 20. 1 Cor. xv. 28. Eph. iv. 6. i. 23. Phil. iii. 18. 20. Psa. lxxiii. 25, 26. John xviii. 36. As God is seen on earth but as in a glass, so is he proportionably enjoyed. But when mourning seeking love hath done, and sin and enemies are overcome, and we behold the glory of God in heaven, the delights of God will then be perfect. You may desire more on earth, than you may hope for. Look not for a kingdom of this world, nor for Mount Zion in the wilderness. Christ reigneth on earth, as Moses in the camp, to guide us to the land of promise. Our perfect blessedness will be, where the kingdom is delivered up to the Father, and God is all in all. A doubt or a strange heartless thought of heaven is water cast on the sacred fire, to quench your holiness and your joy. Can you travel one whole day to such an end, and never think of the place that you are going to? When earth is at the best, it will not be heaven. You live no further by faith like christians, than you either live for heaven in seeking it, or else upon heaven in hope and joy.

VI. Labour to make religion your pleasure and delight, Psa. i. 2, 3. lxxxiv. 2. 10. lxiii. 3. 5. xxxvii. 4. xciv. 19. cxix. 47. 70. Isa. lviii. 14. Psa. cxii. 1. Rom. xiv. 17. v. 1. 3. 5. 1 Pet. i. 8. Matt. v. 11, 12. Psa. xxxii. 11. Look oft to God, to heaven, to Christ, to the Spirit, to the promises, to all your mercies. Call over your experiences, and think what matter of high delight is still before you, and how unseemly it is, and how injurious to

your profession, for one that saith he hopeth for heaven to live as sadly as those that have no higher hopes than earth? How should that man be filled with joy, who must live in the joys of heaven for ever? especially rejoice when the messengers of death do tell you that your endless joy is near. If God and heaven, with all our mercies in the way, be not reason enough for a joyful life, there can be none at all. Abhor all suggestions which would make religion seem a tedious irksome life. And take heed that you represent it not so to others; for you will never make them in love with that, which you make them not perceive to be delightful and lovely. Not as the hypocrite, by forcing and framing his religion to his carnal mind and pleasure; but bringing up the heart to a holy suitableness, to the pleasures of religion.

VII. Watch as for your souls, against this flattering tempting world; especially when it is represented as more sweet and delightful than God, and holiness, and heaven, Gal. vi. 14. 1 John ii. 15, 16. James i. 27. iv. 4, 5. 1 John v. 4, 5. Rom. xii. 2. Gal. i. 4. Tit. ii. 12. Matt. xix, 24. Luke xii. 16—21. xvi. 25. James i. 11. v. 1, 2. 4. Luke viii. 14. Heb. xi. 26. It is this world with its pleasure, wealth, and honours, that is put in the balance by Satan, against God, and holiness, and heaven: and no man shall have better than he chooseth and preferreth. When you hear the serpent, then see his sting, and see death attending the forbidden fruit: O fear the world, when it smileth, or seems sweet and amiable; love it not, if you love your God, and your salvation.

VIII. Fly from temptations, and crucify the flesh, and keep a constant government over your appetite

and senses, Rom. viii. 1. 13. Gal. v. 24. Rom. xiii. 14. Gal. v. 17. Jude 8. 23. 2 Pet. ii. 10. Eph. ii. 3. 1 Pet. ii. 11. Matt. vi. 13. xxvi. 41. Luke viii. 13. Many have shamefully fallen by the sudden surprise of appetite or lust. When custom hath taught these to be greedy and violent, it is not a sluggish wish or purpose that will mortify or rule them! How dangerous a case is that man in, who hath so greedy a beast continually to restrain, that if he do but neglect his watch one hour, is ready to run him headlong into hell! Who can be safe, that standeth long on so terrible a precipice? The tears and sorrows of many years, may perhaps not repair the loss which one hour or act may bring. The case of David and many others, are dreadful warnings. Know what it is that you are most in danger of; whether lust and idleness, or excess in meat or drinks, or play; and there set the strongest watch for your preservation. Make it your daily business to mortify that lust; and scorn that your brutish sense or appetite should conquer reason. Yet trust not purposes alone; but away from the temptation; touch not, yea look not on the tempting bait: keep far enough off, if you desire to be safe. What miseries come from small beginnings! temptation leads to sin, and small sins to greater, and those to hell! and sin and hell are not to be played with! open your sin or temptation to some friend, that shame may save you from danger.

IX. Keep up a constant skilful government over your passions, and your tongues, James i. 19. iii. 13, 17. 1. Pet. iii. 4. Matt. v. 5. Eph. iv. 2, 3. Col. iii. 12. To this end, keep a tender conscience which will smart when in any of these you sin. Let holy passions be well ordered; and selfish car-

nal passions be restrained. Let your tongues know their duties to God and man, and labour to be skilful and resolute in performing them, James i. 26. iii. 5, 6. Psa. xxxiv. 13. Prov. xviii. 21. Know all the sins of the tongue, that you may avoid them; for your innocency and peace do much depend on the prudent government of your tongues.

X. Govern your thoughts with constant skilful diligence, Deut. xv. 9. 2 Cor. x. 5. Gen. vi. 5. Psa. x. 4. xciv. 19. cxix. 113. Prov. xii. 5. xv. 26. Psa. cxix. 59. Prov. xxx. 32. Jer. iv. 14. Duet. xxxii. 29. In this, right habits and affections will do most, by inclining them unto good. It is easy to think on that which we love. Be not unfurnished of matter for your thoughts to work upon: and often retire yourselves for serious meditation. Be not so solitary and deep in musings, as to overstretch your thoughts, and confound your minds, or take you off from necessary converse with others; but be sure that you be considerate, and dwell much at home, and converse most with your consciences, and your God! with whom you have the greatest business! Leave not your thought unemployed, or ungoverned: scatter them not abroad upon impertinent vanities. O that you knew what daily business you have for them! Most men are wicked, deceived, and undone, because they are inconsiderate, and dare not, or will not retiredly and soberly use their reason; or use it but as a slave in chains, in the service of their passion, lust, and interests. He was never wise, or good, or happy, who who was not soberly and impartially considerate. How to be good, to do good, and finally enjoy good, must be the sum of all your thoughts. Keep them first holy, then charitable, clean, and chaste; and quickly check them when they look towards sin.

XI. Let time be exceedingly precious in your eyes, and carefully, and diligently redeem it, Eph.v. 16. Acts xvii. 21. 1 Cor. vii. 29. 2 Cor. vi. 2. John ix. 4. Luke xix. 42. 44. Psa. xxxix. 4. Matt. xxv. 10. 12. What haste doth it make! and then how highly will it be valued, when a minute of it can never be recalled! Oh what important business have we, for every moment of our time, if we should live a thousand years! Take not that man to be well in his wits, or to know his God, his end, or his danger, who hath time to spare. Redeem it, not only from needless sports and plays, and idleness. and curiosity, and compliments, and excess of sleep, and chat; and worldiness; but also from the entanglement of lesser good, which would hinder you from greater. Spend time as men that are ready to pass into another world; where every minute must be accounted for; and it must go with us for ever as we lived here.

XII. Let the love of all in their several capacities become as it were your very nature, 1 Tim. i. 5. 6. Matt. xix. 19. Rom. xiii. 10. 1 John iv. 16. Eph. iv. 2, 15, 16. Col. ii. 2. i. 4. 1 Tim. vi. 11. James iii. 17. Phii. i. 1, 2. 1 Thes. iv. 9. John xiii. 35. Matt. v. 44, 45. 1 Cor. xiii. James iv. 11. Gal. vi. 10. Tit. ii. 24. Phil. ii. 20, 21, Rom. xv. 1. 3. and doing them all the good you can, be very much of the business of your lives. O that men knew how much of christanity doth consist in love, and doing good! With what eyes do they read the gospel, who see not this in every page? Abhor all that selfishness, pride, and passion which are the enemies of love; and those opinions, and factions, and censurings, and backbitings, which would destroy it. Take him that speaketh evil of

another to you, without a just cause and call, to be Satan's messenger, entreating you to hate your brother, or to abate your love. For to persuade you that a man is bad, is directly to persuade you so far as to hate him. Not that the good and bad must be confounded: but love will call none bad without constraining evidence. Rebuke backbiters. Hurt no man, and speak evil of no man; unless it be not only just, but necessary to some greater good. Love is lovely: they that love shall be beloved. Hating and hurting makes men hateful. Love thy neighbour as thyself; and, Do as thou wouldst be done by, are the golden rules of our duty to men; which must be deeply written on your hearts. For want of this, there is nothing so false, so bad, so cruel, which you may not be drawn to think, or say, or do against your brethren. Selfishness and want of love, do as naturally tend to ambition and covetousness, and thence to cruelty against all that stand in the way of their desires, as the nature of a wolf to kill the lambs. All factions, and contentions, and persecutions in the world, proceed from selfishness, and want of charity. Devouring malice is the devilish nature. Be as zealous in doing good to all, as Satan's servants are in hurting. Take it as the use of all your talents, and use them as you would hear of it at last. Let it be your business, and not a matter on the by. Especially for public good, and men's salvation. And what you cannot do yourselves, persuade others to do. Give them good books; and draw them to the means which are most likely to profit them.

XIII. Understand the right terms of church communion; especially the unity of the universal church, and the universal communion which you

must hold with all the parts, and the difference between the church as visible and invisible. For want of these, how woful are our divisions! Read often 1 Cor. xii. Eph. iv. 1—16. John xvii. 21—23. Acts iv. 32. ii. 42. 1 Cor. i. 10, 11. 13. iii. 3. Rom. xvi. 17. Phil. ii. 1—4. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Acts xx. 30. 1 Cor. xi. 19. Titus iii. 10. James iii. Col. i. 4. Heb. x. 25. Acts viii. 12, 13. 37. 1 Cor i. 2. 12, 13. iii. 3. 4. xi. 18, 21. Study these well. You must have union and communion in faith and love, with all the christians in the world. Division is wounding, and tends to death, 1 Cor. i. 10. Rom. xvi. 17. 1 Tim. vi. 5. James iii. 14—18. Abhor it as you love the church's welfare, or your own. The wisdom from above is first pure, and then peaceable. Never separate what God conjoineth. It is the earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom, which causeth bitter envying, and strife, and confusion, and every evil work. Blessed are the peacemakers.

XIV. Take heed of pride and self-conceitedness in religion, 1 Tim. iii. 6. Col. ii. 18. 1 Cor. viii. 1. iv. 6. 1 Tim. vi. 4. 1 Pet. v. 5. James iii. 1. 17. If once you overvalue your own understandings, your crude conceptions and gross mistakes will delight you as some light from heaven; and instead of having compassion on the weak, you will be unruly, and despisers of your guides, and censorious despisers of all that differ from you; and persecutors of them, if you have power; and will think all intolerant, that take you not as oracles, and your words as law. Forget not that the church hath always suffered by censorious, unruly professors on the one hand, (and O what divisions and scandals have they caused!) as well as by the profane and persecutors on the other. Take heed of both: and when contentions

are afoot, be quiet and silent, and not too forward; and keep up a zeal for love and peace.

XV. Be faithful and conscientious in all your relations, Eph. v. and vi. Col. iii. and iv. Rom. xiii. 1—7. 1 Pet. ii. 13—15. Honour and obey your parents, and other superiors. Despise not, and resist not government. If you suffer unjustly by them, be humbled for those sins, which cause God to turn your protectors into afflicters: and instead of murmuring and rebelling against them, reform yourselves, and then commit yourselves to God. Princes and pastors I will not speak to; subjects, and servants, and children, must obey their superiors, as the officers of God.

XVI. Keep up the government of God in your families, Exod. xx. 8—11. Josh. xxiv. 15. Deut. vi. 6—8. Dan. vi. Holy families must be chief preservers of the interest of religion in the world. Let not the world turn God's service into a customary lifeless form. Read the scriptures, and edifying books to them; talk with them seriously about the state of their souls, and everlasting life; pray with them fervently; watch over them diligently; be angry against sin and meek in your own cause; be examples of wisdom, holiness, and patience; and see that the Lord's day be spent in holy preparation for eternity.

XVII. Let your callings be managed in holiness and labouriousness, Heb. xiii. 5. Exod. xx. 8. 9. 2 Thess. iii. 10—12. 1 Thess. iv. 7. 1 Tim. v. 13. Prov. xxxi. Live not in idleness; be not slothful in your work; whether you be bound, or free, in the sweat of your brows you must eat your bread, and labour the six days, that you may have to give to him that needeth. Slothfulness is sensuality as well

as filthier sins. The body, that is able, must have fit employments as well as the soul; or else body and soul will fare the worse. But let all be but as the labour of a traveller, and aim at God and heaven in all.

XVIII. Deprive not yourselves of the benefit of an able faithful pastor, to whom you may open your case in secret, Mal. ii. 7. or at least of a holy faithful friend, Eccl. iv. 9, 10. and be not displeased at their free reproofs, Prov. xii. 1. xv. 5. 10. 31. Heb. iii. 13. Wo to him that is alone! How blind and partial are we in our own cause! And how hard is it to know ourselves without an able faithful helper! You forfeit this great mercy, when you love a flatterer, and angrily defend your sin.

XIX. Prepare for sickness, sufferings, and death, Luke xii. 40. 2 Pet. i. 10. Phil. i. 21. 23. Jer. ix. 4, 5. Matt. vii. 4, 5. 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. 4. 8. Overvalue not prosperity, nor the favour of man! If selfish men prove false and cruel to you, even those of whom you have deserved best, marvel not at it, but pray for your enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, that God would turn their hearts and pardon them. What a mercy is it to be driven from the world to God! when the love of the world is the greatest danger of the soul. Be ready to die, and you are ready for any thing. Ask your hearts seriously, What is it that I shall need at a dying hour? and let it speedily be got ready, and not be to seek in the time of your extremity.

XX. Understand the true method of peace of conscience, and judge not of the state of your souls upon deceitful grounds. As presumptuous hopes do keep men from conversion, and embolden them in sin; so causeless fears do hinder our love and praise

of God, by obscuring his loveliness; and they destroy our thankfulness, and our delight in God, and make us a burden to ourselves, and a grievous stumbling-block to others. The general grounds of all your comfort, are, 1. The gracious nature of God, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 2. The sufficiency of Christ, Heb. vii. 25. and 3. The truth and universality of the promise which giveth Christ and life to all, if they will accept him, John iv. 42. iii. 16. 1 Tim. iv. 10 ii. 4. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Rev. xxii. 17. Isa. lv. 1—3. 6, 7. He that heartily consenteth. that God shall be his God, his Saviour, and Sanctifier, is in a state of life. But this includeth the rejection of the world, Luke xiv. 26. 33. 1 John ii. 15. Matt. vi. 19—21. 33. Col. iii. 1, 2. Rom. viii. 1. 13. Much knowledge, and memory, and utterance, and lively affections, are all very desirable. But you must judge your state by none of these; for they are all uncertain: but if God, and holiness, and heaven have the highest estimation of your practical judgment, as being esteemed best for you; and be preferred in the choice and resolution of your wills, and that habitually, before all the pleasures o the world; and be first and chiefly sought in your endeavours—this is the infallible proof of your sanctification.

Upon long and serious study and experience, I dare boldly commend these directions to thee, as the way of God, which will end in blessedness. The Lord resolve and strengthen thee to obey them.

THE SIXTH CONFERENCE.

OF A HOLY FAMILY, AND HOW TO GOVERN IT, AND PERFORM THE DULY OF ALL FAMILY RELATIONS, AND OTHERS.

PAUL. Welcome, neighbour: how do you like the new life which you have begun? You have taken home instructions already which will find you work; but what do you find in the practising of them?

SAUL. I find that I have foolishly long neglected a necessary, noble, joyful life; and thereby lost my time, and made myself both unskilful and indisposed to the practice of it. I find that the things which you have prescribed me are high and excellent, and doubtless must be very sweet to those who have a suitable skill and disposition; and some pleasure I find in my weak beginnings: but the greatness of the work, and the great backwardness and strangeness of my mind, doth much abate the sweetness of it, by many doubts, and fears, and difficulties. And when I fail, I find it hard both to repent aright, and by faith to fly to Christ for pardon. And if you had not forewarned me of this temptation, I should have thought by these troubles that my case is worse in point of ease, though not of safety, than it was before. But I foresee that better things may yet be hoped for: and I hope I am in the way.

P. Where is your great difficulty, that requireth counsel?

S. I find a great deal of work to do in my family,

to govern them in the fear of God, to do my duty to them all, especially to educate my children, and daily to worship God among them; and I am so unable for it that I am ready to omit all. I pray you help me with your advice.

P. My first advice to you is, that you resolve by God's help to perform your duty as well as you can; and that you devote your family to God, and take him for the Lord and Master of it, and use it as a society sanctified to him, Josh. xxiv. 15. And I pray you let these reasons fix your resolution :—

1. If God be not the Master of your family, the devil will; and if God be not first served in it, the flesh and the world will. And I hope I need not tell you how bad a master, work and wages, they will then have.

2. If you devote your family to God, God will be the Protector of it. He will take care of it, for safety and provision as his own. Do you not need such a protector? And can you have a better? or better take care for the welfare and safety of you and yours? And if your family be not God's, they are his enemies, and under his curse as rebels. Instead of his blessings of health, peace, provision, and success, you may look for sickness, dangers, crosses, distresses, unquietness, and death; or which is worse, that your prosperity shall be a curse and snare to you and yours.

3. A holy family is a place of comfort; a church of God. What a joy will it be to you, to live together daily in this hope, that you shall meet and live together in heaven! to think that wife, children, and servants shall shortly be fellow citizens with you of the heavenly Jerusalem! How pleasant is it to join with one heart and mind in the

service of God, and in his cheerful praises! How lovely will you be to one another, when each one beareth the image of God! What abundance of jars and miseries will be prevented, which sin would daily bring among you! And when any of you die, how comfortably may the rest be about their bed, and attend their bodies unto the grave, when they have good hopes that the soul is received to glory by Christ! But if yonr family be ungodly, it will be grievous to you to look your wife or children in the face, and think that they are like to lie in hell. And their sickness and death will be tenfold the more heavy to you to think of their woful unseen end.

4. Your family hath such constant need of God, as commandeth you constantly to serve him. As every man hath his personal neeessities, so families have family necessities, which God must supply, or they are miserable. Therefore family duty must be your work.

5. Holy families are the chief seminaries of Christ's church on earth, and it is very much that lieth upon them to keep up the interest of religion in the world, 1 Tim. iii. 12. Deut. vi. 7. xxx. 2. Psa. cxlvii. 13. Acts ii. 39. Eph. vi. 4—6. Prov. xxii. 6. 15. xxix. 15. xxiii. 13. Hence come holy magistrates, when great men's children have a holy education. And O what a blessing is one such to the countries where they are! Hence spring holy pastors and teachers to the churches, who, as Timothy, received holy instructions from their parents, and grace from the Spirit of Christ, in their tender age. Many a congregation that is happily fed with the bread of life, may thank God for the endeavours of a poor man or woman, who trained up a child

in the fear of God to become their holy faithful teacher, 2. Tim. iii. 15. Though learning be found in schools, godliness is oftener received from the education of careful parents. When children and servants come to the church with understanding godly prepared minds, the labours of the pastor will do them good; they will receive what they hear with faith, love, and obedience. It will be a joy to the minister to have such a flock; and it will be joyful to the people that are such, to meet together in the sacred assemblies, to worship God with cheerful hearts, and such worshippers will be acceptable to God. But when families come together in gross ignorance, and with unsanctified hearts, there they sit like images, understanding little of what is said, and go home little the better for all the labours of the minister. And the motions of their tongue and bodies, is most of the worship which they give to God: but their hearts are not offered in faith and love as a sacrifice to him, nor do they feel the power and sweetness of the word, and worship him in spirit and truth.

6. And in times when the churches are corrupted, and good ministers are wanting, and bad ones either deceive the people, or are insufficient for their work, there is no better supply to keep up religion, than godly families. If parents and masters will teach their children and servants faithfully, worship God with them holily and constantly, and govern them carefully and orderly, it will much make up the want of public teaching, worship and discipline. O that God would stir up the hearts of people thus, to make their families as little churches, that it might not be in the power of rulers or pastors that are bad, to extinguish religion, or banish godliness from any land. For,

7. Family teaching, worship, and discipline have many advantages, which churches have not. 1. You have but a few to teach and rule, and the pastor hath many. 2. They are always with you, and you may speak to them as seasonably and as often as you will, either together, or one by one; and so cannot he. 3. They are tied to you by relation and affection, and by their own necessities and interest, otherwise than they are to him. Wife and children are more confident of your love to them, than of the minister's; and love doth open the ear to counsel. But the minister doth all by bare exhortation, and that prevaileth little with many.

8. You have greater and nearer obligations to your family than pastors have to all the people. Your wife is as your own flesh; your children are as it were parts of yourself. Nature bindeth you to the dearest affection, and therefore to the greatest duty to them. Who should more care for your children's souls, than their own parents? If you will not provide for them, but famish them, who will feed them? Therefore as ever you have the feelings of parents; as ever you care what becometh of your children's souls for ever, devote them to God, teach them his word, educate them in holiness, restrain them from sin, and prepare them for salvation.

S. I must confess that natural affection telleth me, that there is great reason for what you say: and my own experience the more convinceth me; for if my parents had better instructed me and governed me in my childhood, I had not been like to have lived so ignorantly and ungodily as I have done. But, alas, few parents do their duty! Many take

more pains about their horses, and cattle, than they do about their children's souls !

P. O that I could speak what is deeply upon my heart to all the parents of the land ! I would be bold to tell them, that multitudes are more cruel than bears and lions to their own children. God hath committed their souls as much to their trust and care, as he hath done their bodies. It is they that are at first to devote them to God, to catechise them, Deut. vi. 6—8. xi. 19, 20. and to put them in mind of the state of their souls, their need of Christ, the mercy of redemption, the excellency of holiness, and of everlasting life. It is they that are to watch over them with wisdom, love and diligence, to save them from temptation, Satan, and sin. and to lead them by the example of a holy life.

But alas, most of them neglect this duty altogether, they never seriously remind the child of his natural corruptions, or of the need and use of a Saviour and a Sanctifier, nor of the danger of sin and and hell, nor of the way of a holy life, nor of the joyful state of saints in glory. They teach him his trade and business in the world, but never how to serve God and be saved. They chide him for those faults which are against themselves, or against his prosperity in the world ; but those that are against God and his soul only, they regard not. If they do not by their own example teach him to be prayerless and to neglect God's word, to curse, to swear, to speak filthily, and to deride a holy life, yet they will bear with him in all this wickedness. The Lord's day they are content that he spend in idleness and sports, instead of learning the word of God, and practising his holy worship, that so he may be the more willing to do their work, the week following.

And is not this greater treachery and cruelty, than if they famished their bodies, or turned them naked into the world? If an enemy done this, it were not so bad; but for father and mother, thus to neglect, betray, and undo their children's souls for ever! For them to do it, that should love them as themselves, and have the tenderest care of them! O is not this acting a cruel and unnatural part?

S. Your complaint is sad and just: but I find that men think that the teaching of their children, belongeth to the schoolmaster and the minister only, and not to themselves.

P. Parents, schoolmasters, and pastors, have all their several parts to do; and no one's work goeth on well without the rest. But the parents' is the first and greatest of all. As when the lower school is to teach children to read, and the grammer-school to teach them grammer, and then the university to teach them the sciences. If now the first and second shall omit their parts, and a boy shall be sent to the university before he can read, yea or before he hath learnt his grammer, what a scholar do you think he is like to make! If you have a house to build, one must first fell and square the timber, and another must saw it, and another frame it, and then rear it: but if the first be undone, how shall the second and third be done? A minister should find all his hearers catechised and holily educated, that the church may be a church indeed. But if a hundred or many hundred parents and masters will all cast their work upon one minister, is it likely, think you, to be well done? Or is it any wonder if we have ungodly churches, of christians that are no christians, who hate the minister, and his doctrine, and a holy life? I know that all this will not excuse the minister

from doing what he can for such! If you will send your children and servants ignorant a d ungodly to him, he must do his best. But oh how much more good might he do, and how comfortable would his calling be, if parents would but do their parts!

We talk much of the badness of the world, and there are no men, except bad rulers and pastors, that do more to make it bad, than bad parents, and family governors. The truth is, they are the devil's instruments (as if he had hired them) to betray the souls of their families into his power, and to lead them to hell with greater advantage than a stranger could do.

Many call for church-reformation, and state-reformation, who yet are the plagues of the times themselves, and will not reform one little family. If men would their families, and agree in a holy education of their children, church and state would be soon reformed, when they were made up of such reformed families.

S. I pray you set me down such instructions together, as you think best, concerning all my duty to my children; that I may do my part, and if any of them perish, their damnation may not be owing to me.

P. 1. Labour to possess them with the greatest reverence of God, and the holy scriptures; and show them the word of God, for all that you would teach them, to know or do. For till their consciences come under the fear and government of God, they will be nothing. Never speak of God and holy things to them, but with the greatest gravity and reverence, that the manner as well as the matter may affect them. For if they are used once to jest or play with holy things, they are hardened and

undone. Often take an account, both what they know and how they are affected and resolved; and what they do, both in their open and their secret practice. Leave them not carelessly to themselves, but narrowly watch over them.

II Use all your skill and diligence by word and deed, to make a holy life appear to them, as it is, the most honourable, profitable, safe, and pleasant life in the world; that it may be their constant delight. All your work lieth in making good things pleasant to them, and keep them from feeling religion as a burden, or taking it for a disgraceful, needless, or unpleasant thing. To which end, begin with, and intermix the easiest parts, such as the scripture history. Nature is pleased sooner with history than with precept; and it sweetly insinuateth a love of goodness into children's minds.

III. Let your conference and carriage tend to the just disgrace of sensuality, voluptuousness, pride, and worldliness. When fools commend finery to their children, do you tell them how pride is the devil's sin: teach them to desire the lowest room, and to give place to others. When others tell them of riches, and fine houses, and preferments, do you tell them that these are the devil's baits by which he stealeth men's hearts from God, that they may be damned. When others pamper them and please their appetites, do you often tell them how base and swinish a thing it is, to eat and drink more by appetite than by reason. And labour thus to make pride, sensuality, and worldliness odious to them. Make them often read Luke xii. and xvi. and xviii. and James iv. and v. and Rom. viii. 1—14.

IV. Wisely break them from their own wills. And let them know that they must obey and like

God's will and yours. Men's own wills are the grand idols of the world: and to be given up to them, is next to hell. Tell them how odious and dangerous self-willedness is. In their diet let them not have what they have a mind to, nor yet do not force them to what they loathe; but use them to stand to your choice; and let them have that in temperance which is wholesome, and not loathsome and rather of the coarser than of the finer or the sweeter sort. A corrupted appetite, strengthened by custom, is hardly overcome by all the teaching and counsel in the world. Specially use them not to strong drink: for it is one of the greatest snares to youth.

V, As you love their souls, keep them as far from temptations as you can. Children are unfit persons to struggle against strong temptations. Be sure therefore,

1. To breed your children to a temperate and healthful diet, Luke xxi. 34. and keep tempting meats, but specially drinks, from before them.

2. Breed them up to constant labour, which may never leave mind or body idle, but at the hours of necessary recreation which you allow them.

3. Let their recreations be such as tend more to the health of their bodies than the humouring of a corrupted fancy: keep them from gaming for money from cards, dice, and stage-plays, play-books, and love-books, and foolish wanton tales and ballads. Let their time be stinted by you: and let it be no more than what is needful to their health and labour as whetting to the mower.

4. Let their apparel be plain, decent, and warm, but not gawdy, neither such as useth to signify pride, or to tempt people to it.

5. Be sure when they grow towards ripeness, that you keep them from opportunity, nearness, or familiarity with tempting persons of another sex.

VI. Be sure that you engage your children in good company, and keep them as much as possible out of bad. Wicked children, before you are aware will infect them with their wicked tongues and practices: they will quickly teach them to drink, to game, to talk filthily, to swear, to mock at godliness, and sobriety: and O what tinder is in corrupted nature!

But the company of sober pious children and servants will use them to a sober pious language, and will further them in knowledge and the fear of God, or at least will keep them from great temptations.

VII. Do all that you do with them in love and wisdom: make them not so familiar with you that shall produce contempt: and be not so strange to them as shall tempt them to have no love to you, or pleasure in your company. But let them perceive the tender feelings of parents, and that indeed they are dear to you, and that all your counsel and government is for their good, and not for any end or passions of your own. And give them familiarly the reason of all which they are apt to be prejudiced against. For love and reason must be the means of most of the good that you do them.

VIII. Keep a special watch upon their tongues: especially against loose talk, and lying: for dangerous corruptions do quickly this way obtain dominion.

IX. Teach them highly to value time: tell them the preciousness of it; by reason of the shortness of man's life, the greatness of his work; and how eternity dependeth on these uncertain moments. Labour to make time-wasting odious to them. And

set death still before their eyes : and ask them often whether they are ready to die.

X. Let correction be wisely used, as they need it ; neither so severely as to make them dislike you, nor so little as to leave them in a course of sin and disobedience. Let it be always in love ; and more for sin against God, than any worldly matters : and show them scripture against the sin, and for the correction.

XI. Pray earnestly for them, and commit them by faith to Christ, as the only Saviour, and their rightful Lord.

XII. Go before them by a holy and sober example, and let your practice tell them what you would have them be, specially in representing godliness delightful, and living in the joyful hopes of heaven.

XIII. Choose such trade and calling for them, as have least dangerous temptations, and as tend most to the saving of their souls, and to make them most useful in the world, and not those that tend most to the ease of the flesh, or worldly ends.

These are the counsels which I earnestly recommend to you in this important work. But you must know that your children's souls are so precious, and the difference between the good and bad so great, that all this must not seem too much trouble to take for it. But as you would have ministers hold on in the labour of their places, so must you in yours, as knowing that a dumb and idle parent is no more excusable than an unfaithful, dumb, and idle minister. The Lord give you skill, and will, and diligence to practice all : for I take the due education of children to be one of the most needful and most excellent works in the world, specially for mothers.

S. I pray you next tell me my duty to my wife, and hers to me.

P. I. The common duty of husband and wife, is 1. Entirely to love each other, Eph. v. 25—33. Col. iii. 19. and therefore it is most important to choose one that is truly lovely, and to proceed in the choice with great deliberation: and avoid all things that tend to quench your love.

2. To dwell together and enjoy each other, and faithfully join as helpers in the education of their children, the government of the family, and the management of their worldly business.

3. Especially to be helpers of each other's salvation; to stir up each other to faith, love, obedience, and good works; to warn and help each other against sin, and all temptations; to join in God's worship in the family and in private; to prepare each other for the approach of death, and comfort each other in the hopes of life eternal.

4. To avoid all dissensions, and to bear with those infirmities in each other which you cannot cure; to assuage and not provoke unruly passions; and in lawful things to please each other.

5. To keep conjugal chastity and fidelity; and to avoid all unseemly and immodest carriage with any other, which may stir up jealousy: and yet to avoid all jealousy, which is unjust.

6. To help one another to bear their burdens, and not by impatience to make them greater. In poverty, crosses, sickness, dangers, to comfort and support each other. And to be delightful companions, in holy love and heavenly hopes and duties, when all other outward comforts fail.

S. II. What are the special duties of the husband?

P. They are, 1. To exercise love and authority

together (never separated) to his wife. 2. To be the chief teacher and governor of the family, and provider for its maintenance. 3. To excel the wife in knowlege and patience, 1 Pet. iii. 7. and to be her teacher and guide in the matters of God, and to be the chief in bearing infirmities and trials. 4. To keep up the wife's authority and honor in the family over inferiors.

S. III. What are the special duties of the wives?

P. The duties of wives are, 1 Tim. iii. 11, 12. Zech. xii. 14. 1 Pet. iii. 1. Col. iii. 18. Eph. v. 22. 24. Tit. ii. 4, 5. 1 Cor. vii. 16. 1. To excel in love. 2. To be obedient to their husbands, and examples therein to the rest of the family. 3. Submissively to learn of their husbands, (that can teach them,) and not to be self conceited, talkative or imperious. 4. To subdue their passions, deny their own fancies and wills, and not to tempt their husbands to satisfy their humours and vain desires, in pride, excess, revenge, or any evil; nor to rob God and the poor, by a proud and wasteful humour. 5. To govern their tongues, that their words may be few, and grave, and sober; and to abhor a running and a scolding tongue. 6. To be contented in every condition, and not to torment their husbands and themselves with impatient murmurings. 7. To avoid the childish vanity of gaudy apparel, and following vain fashions of the prouder sort; and to abhor their vice that waste precious time in curious and tedious dressings, gossipings, visits, and feasts. 8. To help on the maintenance of the family, by frugality, and by their proper care and labour. 9. Not to dispose of their husband's estate without his consent or approbation. 10. Above all to be constant helpers of the holy education of their children. For this is

the most eminent service that women can do in the world; and it is so great, that they have no cause to grudge at God, for the lowness of their place and gifts; for mean gifts with wisdom and godliness may serve to speak to children. The mother is still with them, and they are still under her eye; her love must chiefly work towards their salvation. She must be daily teaching them to know God, and speaking to them for holiness and against sin, and reminding them of the world to come, and teaching them to pray. Godly mothers may educate children for magistracy, ministry, and all public services, by helping them to that honest and holy disposition, which is the chief thing necessary in every relation to the common good; and so they may become chief instruments of the reformation and welfare of churches, and kingdoms, and of the world.

S. I pray you tell me also the duty of children.

P. The duty of children to their parents is, Eph. vi. 1—3. Col. iii. 20. Prov. i. 8, 9. xiii. 1. xxiii. 22. 1. To love them dearly, and to be thankful for all that love and care which they can never requite. 2. To learn of them submissively; especially the doctrine of salvation. 3. To obey them diligently in all lawful things; and that for conscience sake, in obedience to God. 4. To honor them in thought, and words, and actions, Gen. ix. 22. 25. Prov. xxx. 17. and avoid all appearance of slighting, dishonour, or contempt. 5. To be contented with their parents' allowance and provisions and willing and ready to such labour or employment as they command them. 6. To take patiently the reproofs and corrections of their parents, and to confess their faults with humble penitence and amend. 7. To use such company as their parents command them, and not to

run into the company of vain and tempting persons. 8. To be content with such a calling as their parents choose for them. 9. To relieve their parents, if they need.

S. What is the duty of masters towards their servants?

P. 1. To rule them with such gentleness as becometh fellow Christians, Eph. vi. 9. Col. iv. 1, and yet with such authority, as that they be not encouraged to contempt. 2. To restrain them from sinning against God. 3. To instruct them in the doctrine of salvation, and pray with them, and go before them by the example of a sober holy life. 4. To keep them from evil company, and temptations, and opportunities of sinning. 5. To set them upon proper labours: to keep no idle servingmen, nor yet to over labour them to the injury of their health nor command them any unlawful thing. 6. To provide them such food and lodging as is wholesome and meet for them; and to pay them what wages is due to them by promise or desert. 7. Patiently to bear with daily infirmities, and such frailties as must be expected in mankind.

S. What is the duty of servants to their masters?

P. To honour and reverence them, and obey them in all lawful things, belonging to their places to command, 1 Pet. ii. 18. Tit. ii. 9. 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2. Col. iii. 22—25. Eph. vi. 5—8. Matt. x. 24, and to avoid all words and carriage which savour of dishonour, contempt or disobedience. 2. Willingly to perform all the labour which they undertake and is required of them, and that without grudging; and to be as faithful behind their master's back as before his face. 3. To be trusty in word and deed; to abhor lying and deceit; not to wrong their mas-

ters in buying or selling, or by stealing or taking any thing of theirs, no not meat or drink against their wills; but being as thrifty and careful for their master's profit, as if it were their own. 4. Not to murmur at the meanness of food that is wholesome, nor to desire a life of fulness, ease, and idleness. 5. To be more careful to do their duty to their masters, than how their masters shall use them. Because sin is worse than suffering. 6. Not to reveal the secrets of the family abroad, to strangers or neighbours. 7. Thankfully to receive instruction, and to learn God's word, and observe the Lord's day, and seriously join in public and private worshipping of God. 8. Patiently to bear reproof and due correction, and to confess their faults, and amend. 9. To pray daily for a blessing on the family, and on their labours, and on themselves. 10. And to do all this in true obedience to God, expecting their reward from him.

S. Now you have gone so far, tell us our duty to our neighbours.

P. Your duty to your neighbours lieth in love and justice: 1. To love them as yourself. 2. To do as you would be done by; for which the six last commandments are your rule. Your love must be exercised, 1. Towards their souls in furthering their salvation, by drawing them to hear God's word, helping them to good books, giving them seasonable, wise, and serious exhortations; and by the example of a holy, blameless life. 2. Towards their bodies, by doing them all the good you can; and doing them no wrong, nor speaking evil of them, nor provoking or scandalizing them; but patiently bearing and forgiving injuries from them.

S. And what is the duty of subjects to magistrates?

P. 1. To reverence and honour them as the officers of God, and speak not dishonourably of them. 2. To pay them due tribute, and to protect them to your power in your place. 3. To obey them in all lawful things, which it belongeth to their several powers places, and offices to command, Rom. xiii. 1—7. 4. To provoke others to the same obedience. 5. To avoid all conspiracies, seditions, treasons, and rebellions, and resistance of the higher powers, Tit. iii. 1, 2. 1 Tim. ii. 2, and patiently to suffer where God forbiddeth us to obey. 6. To approve and further the execution of true justice. 7. To detect and resist all treasons, conspiracies, and rebellions in others. 8. To do all this for conscience sake, in obedience to God, and for the common good.

S. Must I not obey all the laws and commands of rulers?

P. No; you must obey none which command you any thing which God forbiddeth; or which forbid you any thing which is at that time and place your duty by God's command.

S. Will you next lay me down distinct directions how to spend every day in my family, and by myself?

P. I will not set you upon too much, nor upon any unnecessary task, less I hinder you, while I seem to help you. 1. Let the time of your sleep be so much only as health requireth, Prov. vi. 9, 10, for precious time is not to be wasted in unnecessary sluggishness.

2. Let your heart be so disposed Godward, that your waking thought may make out towards him, Psa. cxxxix. 18. Lift up a thankful heart for your night's rest unto him; and think what a blessed rest you shall have in the presence of his glory;

and how great a privilege it is to be in his love, and under his protection; and if you have company, speak these thought to others.

3. Quickly dress you; and use no vain attire that shall steal your time, 1 Pet. iii. 3. But if sickness or other necessity make it long, either let one of your children read a chapter to you till you are ready; or let some suitable meditation or discourse take up the time.

4. Go presently to prayer by yourself, or with your wife.

5. Let family worship be kept up twice a day, unless some extraordinary necessity hinder it, at the most convenient hours of the day.

6. Do all your business as the work of God, more than your own; and do nothing but what it is his will that you should do; that you may expect from him both protection and reward: and often renew your devotion of yourself and all your business to him, and your actual intending to please and glorify him.

7. Highly value all your time, and follow your labours with constant diligence, believing that it is part of your service of God: six days must you labour, and do all that you have to do. Idleness is the ruin of soul, body, and estate.

8. Be well acquainted with your special corruptions and the special temptations of every day; and never intermit your watch against them.

9. If you labour alone, take in such seasonable meditations as you need and your business will permit; but turn it to good conference if you are in company. Not so as to think and talk of nothing else, to turn all to weariness or affected formality; but at seasonable times, and in a serious manner.

And talk not of small matters, but of heart and of heaven affairs.

10. Crave God's blessing upon your food, and return him thanks for it: receive it, not chiefly to please your appetite, but to strengthen you as a servant of God, for your duty; and for quality and quantity avoid flesh-pleasing curiosity and excess—Prov. xxxi. 4, 6—and make your health and reason, and not your appetite, the measure of both. Write over your table, "Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom; pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy"—Ezek. xvi. 49. And, "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.—Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," &c.—Luke xvi. 19, 25. "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts (or desires) thereof"—Rom. xiii. 14.

11. At evening return to your food, and to God's worship in your family, and in secret, as was directed you in the morning.

12. At night, look back how you have spent the day; not to waste time in writing down all sins and mercies which are ordinary—for the same coming daily to be repeated will turn all to formality—but to have a special thankfulness for special mercies; and a special repentance for great or aggravated sins, yea, for all that you remember. And quickly rise, by free confession, repentance, and faith, where you have fallen. And so betake yourself to rest, with a confidence in God's protection and delightful meditation of him—Psa. iv. 7—9.

S. You tell me of family worship twice a day; pray you tell me how I must perform it.

P. 1. With a composed, reverent mind; having all your family together that can come, briefly crave God's assistance and acceptance. 2. Then read a chapter, and, if you have leisure, a portion of some other good book, or else bid them mark such passages as most concern them as you go. 3. Before or after, sing a psalm, if you have a family that can sing; if not, read some psalms of praise. 4. Then in faithful fervent prayer call on God through Jesus Christ, in his Spirit, and so at evening.

S. Have you any more counsel for me, for the good and order of my family?

P. At this time I will add no more but these: 1. Watch against your worldly business, that it eat not out the life and seriousness of holy duties. Alas, in most families in the world, the world is all that they have any sense of; though yet your calling must be followed.

S. Truly the times are so hard, and people so very poor, that necessity is a constant and great temptation to them.

P. I know it is; but the less comfort you have here, and the harder this world useth you, the more careful should you be in reason, to make sure of a better world. Poor men have souls to save, and a heaven to win, and a hell to escape, and a Christ to believe in, and a God to love and serve, as well as the rich. And I tell you that your temptations are less than theirs.

2. Do all that you can to keep up in yourself and family the joy of believing, and a delight in God and all his service. And therefore let your daily prayer have much in it of thanksgiving and praise.

3. You that are a farmer, and sit by your servants in the long winter nights, get a good book and read

to them while they are with you—Deut. xvii. 19; Acts viii. 28, 30. I will not discourage your own exhortations: but few husbandmen can discourse so profitably, so closely, soundly, and searchingly as many such books will do, if you choose aright. But more of this in the next conference.

THE SEVENTH CONFERENCE.

HOW TO SPEND THE LORD'S DAY IN CHRISTIAN FAMILIES, AND IN THE CHURCH, AND IN SECRET DUTIES.

PAUL. Welcome, neighbour; how goes matters between you and your family? yea, and your God?

SAUL. O sir, you have set me a great deal of work, which my conscience telleth me is good and necessary, and better than any else that I can spend my time in. But my heart is bad and backward; and it is not so soon learnt as heard, nor so soon done as learnt. And yet I come to you for more; for I am resolved to take God and heaven for my all, and therefore to be true to the covenant I have made; I desire you now to instruct me about the right observation of the Lord's day.

P. The general instructions which you must take are these:—

1. That the chief use of the day is for the public worshipping of God, our Creator and Redeemer,

Acts ii. 4, 5. And therefore, that which is public is to be preferred before all that is more private.

2. That the chief work which it is to be spent in, is learning the doctrine of the gospel, and praising and giving thanks to our heavenly Father, our Redeemer and Sanctifier. The rest cometh under this.

3. Therefore the manner of it, and the frame of our hearts, should be holy joy, and gratitude, and love, stirred up by the exercise of faith and hope; and it should be spent as a day of thanksgiving for the greatest mercy.

S. Now, set me down all my duty in its order.

P. 1. Make due preparations for the day beforehand. Let your six days' labour be so despatched that it may not hinder you; cast off worldly thoughts, and remember the last Lord's day's instructions; and repent of all your sins of the week past; and go in season to your rest.

2. Let your first thoughts be suitable to the day. Remember with joy the resurrection of your Saviour; which begun the triumphant glorious state, as you awake in the beginning of this holy day; and let your heart be glad to think that a day of the Lord is come.

3. Rise fully as early on that day as on your labouring days; and think not that swinish sloth is your holy rest.

4. Let your dressing time be short, and spent as aforesaid, in hearing a chapter read, or in good thoughts or suitable speech to those about you.

5. If you can, go first to secret prayer. And let servants despatch their necessary business about cattle, that it stand not after in their way.

6. Then call your servants to family worship, and if you can have time, without coming too late to the

assembly, read the Scripture, sing a psalm of praise, and call on God with joyful thanksgiving for our redemption and the hopes of glory; or so much of this as you can do. But do all with seriousness and alacrity; and tell your servants and children what it is that they go to do at the church.

7. Go to the beginning of public worship, and let none be absent that can go. Your duty there I must show you by itself anon.

8. After your return, while dinner is preparing, is a seasonable time for secret prayer or meditation on the great business of the day, and to consider of what you heard in public.

9. Let your time at meat be seasoned with some cheerful mention of the mercies of our Redeemer, or what is suitable to the hearers and the day.

10. After dinner, if there be time, call your family together and sing a psalm of praise, and help them to remember what was taught them.

11. Then take them again in time to the assembly.

12. When you come home, call them all together, and after craving God's assistance and acceptance through Christ, sing a psalm of praise, and repeat the sermon, or cause it to be repeated, not tediously, but so much as the time may bear. Or if there were no sermon, or one unsuitable to your family, read nearly an hour to them in some suitable and lively book. And conclude with prayer and praise to God; and all with seriousness, alacrity and joy.

13. Between that and supper both you and such children and servants as can possibly be spared, betake yourselves to secret prayer and meditation.

14. At supper do as beforesaid at dinner; still remember that though it be a day of thanksgiving, yet not of sensuality, gluttony or excess.

15. When they have supped, examine your children and servants what they have learnt that day, unless you appoint an hour on the week-day for it; and so for catechising them. Then sing a psalm of praise, and so conclude with prayer and thanksgiving; catechising must not be neglected; but if you can do most of it on week-days or holidays, it will be best, that it take not up the Lord's day, which is for holy praise.

16. When you go to rest review briefly the special occurrences of the day. Repent of failings; give thanks for mercies; and comfortably compose yourself to rest, as trusting in the protection of your gracious God; and so let your last thoughts be such as are meet to shut up such a holy day.

These directions are soon given and heard; but oh! happy you if you sincerely practise them!

S. I pray you next instruct me how to worship God in public; and first how I may hear with profit.

P. I. Be careful to understand what you hear. For this end you should read the Scriptures and good books to prepare you, and diligently attend when you listen, especially marking the doctrine, design and drift of the preacher. And afterwards you should meditate upon what you have heard asking others who are better instructed than yourself the meaning of what you doubt of, and praying to God to make clear whatever seems dark and uncertain.

II. You should be duly affected with what you hear. Remember with whom you have to do, and of how great importance the busines is which you are upon. Go to the house of God as one that is going to hear a message from heaven concerning

your everlasting salvation. [Learn to value the time of worship as a precious season wherein your soul may grow in grace and knowledge, and you may be strengthened and comforted in your work.]

Lift up a secret request to Christ for his quickening Spirit; and when you come home it will be a help to you if you preach the doctrine over again both to yourself and your family.

III. You must practise what you hear; and that you may do this the better, it will be well for you to think over beforehand the corruptions of your heart which need a cure, and the wants that need supply: that so you may go with the desire to get what you want, as you go to the market to buy,and to the physician to be healed.

Mark well the practical directions, and let conscience urge them home as you hear them; and above all resolve to obey whatever God maketh known to be his will. Live if you can with holy diligent christians; and avoid those who stifle practice, either Antinomians, who, under pretence of exalting Christ and free grace, are opposed to holiness; or disputers who fill men's heads with little but controversy; or worldly and profane men who jeer at godliness as hypocrisy, and think that we may get to heaven without making so much stir about it.

S. How must I hear and read the scriptures themselves?

P. 1. Be sure you come to them with a believing, reverent, spiritual mind, as to the word of the living God, by which you must be ruled and judged, and which you must fully resolve to obey, Heb. iv. 2. Matt. xii. 3. 5. xxi. 16. 1 Tim. iv. 13. Neh. viii. 8. Matt. xxiv. 15. Eph. iii. 4: as a humble learner of

heavenly mysteries from the Son and Spirit of God, and not as a proud and arrogant caviller or judge, Matt. xviii. 3; nor as expecting philosophy or curious words, instead of the laws of God for our salvation. 2. Read most the New Testament, and the most suitable parts of scripture. 3. Expound the dark and rarer passages by the plain and frequent ones. 4. Read some commentary or annotations as you go, if you can. 5. Ask your pastor of that which you understand not, Acts viii. 28—31.

S. What must I do in public prayer, praises, and thanksgiving?

P. 1. Join in them earnestly with the desires and praises of your heart, 1 Chron. xvi. 36. Neh. v. 13. viii. 6. Psa. cvi. 48. And be not a bare hearer; for that is to be a hypocrite; and to seem to pray when indeed you do not.

2. In all the lawful orders, gestures, and manner of behaviour in God's worship, affect not to differ from the rest, but conform yourself to the use of the church which you join with; for in a church singularity is a discord.

S. How must I receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood?

P. You must, I. Have a due preparation. II. A due performance.

S. I. What is the due preparation?

P. You must first understand what the sacrament is of which you are about to partake.

1. It is a solemn commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ by his death, until he came, 1 Cor. xi. 24—26. 28—30. Matt. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24. Luke xxii. 20. Heb. ix. 15—18. 1 Cor. x. 16, 24. John vi. 32. 35. 51. 58. That the Church may, as it were, see his body broken and his blood shed, and

behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.

2. It is a solemn renewing of the covenant of grace, on Christ's part, and on ours. Here Christ for life, is delivered to us; and we accept him: and man delivereth up himself to Christ, and Christ accepteth him.

3. It is a lively means for Christ's Spirit and our souls to work by, to stir up faith, desire, love, thankfulness, hope, joy, and new obedience, besides repentance. By showing us the doleful fruits of sin, the wonderful love of God in Christ, the firmness of the promise or covenant, the greatness of the gift, and our great obligations. Thus we must here have communion with God and Jesus Christ, in the exercise of all these graces; and receive more grace through our sacrificed Redeemer.

4. It is a symbol or badge of the church; and a public profession of our continued faith, hope, thankfulness, love, and obedience.

5. It is a sign and means of the union, love, and communion of the saints, and their readiness to communicate to one another, Matt. xxvi. 26—28. Mark xiv. 24. Luke xxii. 20. John vi. 63. xv. 1—3. 2 Cor. v, 14. vi. 17, 18. John iv. 14.

S. You have told me what I must understand. Now tell me what I must be, that I may be prepared to receive.

P. You must be a true christian, that is a penitent believer already in covenant with God, by consent.

S. May every christian come, how weak soever?

P. Yes; if there be nothing to prevent him but weakness, and not some particular hinderance, or unpreparedness, which I am next to speak to you of.

S. But what if he be in doubt whether he is sincere.

P. He must do his best to be satisfied, and when he hath done, must do according to the best judgment that he is able to make of himself. As now, I tell you that your consent to the covenant is your christianity: I ask you whether you consent unfeignedly? If you do, you may somewhat perceive that you do: and if you say, I am not sure that I consent sincerely, but as far as I can know my heart I think I do, you must then communicate: for it is the being of sincerity and not the assurance of it, which is necessary; and we are all so unacquainted with our own hearts, that if we must not speak according to our best discerning of them, without assurance, we must lay by our thanksgiving, and a great part of our other duties.

S. But what if I prove mistaken, and be not sincere?

P. If you are not sincere, and yet think you are, it is your great sin that you are not so, and will not consent to the covenant and mercy offered you, Josh. xxiv. 15. Matt. xvi. 15, 16. 1 John v. 10—12. Rev. xxii. 17. and it is your sin to think that you consent when you do not. And there is a greater weight lieth upon this, than your respect to the sacrament; for you are an heir of hell till you truly consent, whether you receive the sacrament, or not.

S. But what if I find it a work too hard for me, to try myself?

P. Go to your pastor, or to some other able divine or friend, and open your case fully to them and take their help, Acts ii. 37, 38. John iii. 20, 21.

S. Can any one else tell what is in me, if I cannot tell myself?

P. You can best tell what you feel: but another may better tell you what that signifieth, and also by what rules and signs you must proceed in judging. The patient knoweth better than the physician what he feeleth, and must first tell that to the physician: but the physician then can better tell him, what cause it cometh from, and what is the nature of the disease, and what is like to come of it, and how it must be cured.

S. But may not an unregenerate man come, that thinketh he is sincere, and doth mistake?

P. He that is truly willing to have God for his God, and Christ for his Saviour, Teacher, and Lord, and the Spirit for his Sanctifier, is a true christian, and may come. And he that will not, must not lie, by taking Christ in representation, when he refuseth him in heart and deed, 1 Cor. xi. 28—30. Nor may he outwardly take the signs of those benefits, pardon, and life, which indeed he is incapable of.

S. What is the particular preparation which is necessary?

P. 1. To renew our meditations of the nature and use of the sacrament, and how holy a work it is to transact so great a business with God and our Redeemer, before the congregation, that so we may come with holy and reverent, and not with common and regardless minds.

2. To examine ourselves both whether we continue our unfeigned consent of the covenant of God, and also whether we live according to our covenant in a godly, sober, righteous, and charitable life, and live not in any wilful sin, 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29, and what falls we have been guilty of. And accordingly to humble ourselves to God and to man, where the case requireth it, by true repentance. And to ask them

forgiveness whom we have wronged, and to forgive them that have wronged us; that we may be fit to receive forgiveness from God, and for loving communion with him and his church.

3. To consider beforehand, what we are to do when we come to the sacrament, and what we are to receive.

S. II. You have told me what the preparation must be. Will you now tell me what I must do at the sacrament?

P. In general, you must renew your covenant with God in Christ, and receive renewed mercies from him.

And for this end, you must endeavour to obtain a lively sense of your sin and misery, of your need of Christ, and his blood, and Spirit; and learn to loathe yourself more and more, and get a higher esteem of him and his grace. You must have a thankful sense of the wonderful love of God in our redemption, and hunger and thirst after the full enjoyment of fellowship with Christ. You must renounce all other hopes, and carnal worldly pleasures, forsaking all in heart for Christ, and being ready to suffer for him whose sufferings save us.

S. How often should I communicate?

P. As oft as the church doth in which you live. In old time it was done at least every Lord's day.

S. I pray you next teach me how to mediate profitably in private on all occasions.

P. I. Choose such matters to mediate on, [as you find most profitable and improving, most apt to quicken and enliven your soul, and stir you up to duty, Gen. xxiv. 63. Josh i. 8. Psa. i. 2. lxiii. 6. 1 Tim. iv. 15. Psa. civ. 34. cxix. 97. 99. 15. 23. 48. 78. 148. cxliii. 5. lxxvii. 12. Such as these:]

1. The truth of the gospel and of the life to come to confirm your faith and hope. 2. The infinite goodness and love of God in Christ, and the joyful state of the blessed in heaven, to inflame your love, and heavenly desires and joys. 3. The sufficiency of Christ, in all cases; to exercise your communion with him by faith. 4. The operations of the Spirit; that you may know how to receive and improve them. 5. The nature of all duties, that you may know how to do them. 6. The evil and nature of every sin, and the ways of all temptation; that you may know how to avoid or overcome them. 7. The nature of all mercies, that you may thankfully improve them. 8 The use of afflictions, and the nearness of death, and what will be then necessary; that you may be prepared with faith and patience, and all may be your gain.

II. For the time and length of meditation, let it be (whether at your work, or when you do nothing else) at your best opportunity and leisure. And let it be as long as your time will allow you without neglecting any other duty, and as your head can well bear it. For solid sober men can carry on long and regular meditations: but ignorant weak men must take up with short and broken thoughts; like short prayers: and melancholy people are unfit for any musings or meditation at all. For to try to do that which they cannot do, will but make them worse.

The benefit of such meditation is very great: few men grow very wise or very good that use it not. We are full of ourselves, and near ourselves, and know our own hearts, better than others do; and many will hear and learn of themselves that will hardly hear and learn of others. And secret duties have usually most sincerity.

S. I would next entreat you to teach me how to pray in secret.

P. I told you in part before. I now only add—

I. Understand well what it is that you must desire in your heart, and in what order: and then you will have a habit of prayer in you, when you have got a habit of those desires. For desire is the life of prayer.

II. When you have got this impression of holy desires on your heart, you are then a christian indeed; let the expressing or wording of them be according to occasions. For particular occasions may call you oft to mention some particular sins, wants, or mercies, without then mentioning the rest; so did the apostles oft—Acts i. 24, iv. 31, vi. 6, viii. 15, ix. 40, xxviii. 8—or to mention them more largely than the rest; as there is cause.

III. Think not that you have prayed, when your tongue hath gone without your heart—Psa. cxlii. 2, xlii. 4, lxii. 8; Lam. ii. 19; Matt. xv. 8. Therefore get the deepest sense of your sins, wants, and mercies, and labour more with your hearts than with your tongues. And out of the abundance and treasure of a feeling, fervent heart, the tongue will be able so to speak as that God will accept it.

IV. Go to God only in the name of Christ, in trust upon his merits and intercession—1 John ii. 12; John xiv. 13, 14; xv. 16; xvi. 23, 24, 26; 1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. vii 25; Rom. viii. 34; 2 Tim. iv. 16. Put all your prayers as into his hands, to offer them to God; and expect every mercy from God as by his hands. For since sin defiled us, man can have no happy communion with God in himself, but by a mediator.

V. Live as you pray, and think not that confessing

sin to God will excuse you for continuing in it—Luke xxii. 40, 46, xxi. 36. And labour for what you pray for; and think not that praying is all that you have to do, to get God's grace, any more than to get your food and raiment: but you must labour, and beg for God's blessing thereon.

About family prayer, I spake before.

S. I pray you briefly direct me for good conversation.

P. 1. Be furnished for it by a good understanding and a zealous soul—Matt. xii. 34-36, xiii. 52; Psa. cxix. 46, cxlv. 5, 6—for as a man is, so will he speak. The inward disposition is all in all.

2. When you are with those that can teach you, be much forwarder to hear than to speak. Pride maketh men of a talkative disposition.

3. Yet if such be silent as can teach you, set them on work by some seasonable question. For the best are too dull and backward to good. And many are silent for want of occasion, opportunity, or invitation.

4. When you speak to the ignorant and sinful, do it not in a contemptuous proud way, but with clear convincing reason, and with great love and gentleness. Let instruction and sweet exhortation be instead of reproof, for the most part. And when you must reprove them, do it usually in secret and not before others; for disgrace will provoke them, and hinder them from repentance.

5. Drive home all your holy conversation in some practical issue; for your own affection and resolution when you learn of others; and to affect the hearers at the very heart, and bring them to resolve on that which is their duty, when it is your lot to be as a teacher to others.

6. Avoid two pernicious destroyers of good dis-

course: 1. Choosing little things, though good, to talk of. As some small controversy, word, or text less pertinent to men's present necessities—Tit. iii. 9. 2. An ignorant unskilful manner of talking of weighty matters. Abundance of good people breed scorn and contempt in the wiser sort of hearers by their imprudent manner of speech.

7. Because the ignorant and unlearned cannot well avoid this, when they talk with those that are more wise and learned than themselves, I advise them to say little to such, unless to name some plain text of scripture which may convince them, and instead of the rest, 1. To get them to read some fit books. 2. And to get them to discourse with some ministers or others that can answer them well and silence all their cavils.

S. I have but one thing more to desire now: that you will teach me how to keep days of humiliation and thanksgiving in private and in public.

P. I would not overwhelm you with precepts. A little may serve for both these, besides what is said on other subjects. 1. In public the pastors must choose the time of humiliations and fasts, with the order, and words, and circumstances of performance. But in private your discretion must be chooser. And it must be, 1. After some great sin. 2. Or in some great danger or judgment, private or public. 3. Or when some great mercy is desired, or work to be done. And so thanksgivings are for great mercies and deliverances.

2. The manner of humiliation is, by due fasting, and confession, and prayer to humble the soul penitently for sin, and beg the mercy which we want—Esth. iv. 16; Joel i. 14-16; Ezra viii. 21-23. And the manner of thanksgiving, to rejoice soberly and

spiritually, with moderate feasting when that is convenient, and give God thanks for his mercy, and beg the grace to improve it, and renew our devotion and resolutions of obedience—Esth. ix. 17, 18; Psa. lxxxi. 3.

3. The outward parts, fasting and feasting, must not be made a form or ceremony of, nor judged to be pleasing to God merely in and for themselves: but must be chosen only as means which help us to their proper ends, humiliation and thanksgiving; and may be varied as men's cases and bodies differ. The weak may be humbled without fasting, or with less, Matt. ix. 13. xii. 7. and the poor and the sickly may give thanks without feasting, or with little. And all must take heed of offering God a sacrifice of the sin of sensuality and excess.

4. True repentance in humiliation, and increased love to God in thanksgiving, and true reformation of life by both, is the great end to be aimed at, Rom, xiv. 17. 1 Cor. viii. 8. Isa. lviii. 2—7. Psa. 1. 14, 15. 23. xvi. 1 Cor. v. 8. and all that attaineth not that end, or truly aimeth at it is vain. But so much for the present.

THE EIGHTH CONFERENCE.

DIRECTIONS FOR A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE DEATH.

Saul. Sir, I have been since I saw you with divers of my neighbours at their death: and I see that weakness and pain of body, and the terrors of death, and the stir of friends and physicians, are such great impediments to men's preparation then, that I earnestly entreat you to help me to make ready while I am in health. For I am loth to leave so great a work to so weak a state, and so sad, and short uncertain time.

Paul. It is God's great mercy to you to make you so wise. There is nothing in which the folly of ungodly men doth more appear, than in delaying their serious preparations for death. Is there any man so brutish as not to know that he must die? And he is scarcely a man, much less a christian, who believeth not that death will pass him into another state of life. There is no man can doubt but this change is sure, and very near; and no man knoweth how near, or when. And oh how great a change will it be! The body which must now be honoured, and pleased, and preferred, must then become a loathsome corpse; the pleasant cups, the delicious food, the adorned rooms, the gay attire, the soft beds, the delightful gardens, walks, and fields, the honour and precedency, power and command, are all at an

end, and turned into a dark and silent grave, Luke xvi. House and lands, wealth and honor, greatness and vain glory, sports and worldly pleasures, are wholly at an end, and will follow them no further. but be to them as if they had never been. And the soul must appear in another society, among the spirits that have finished their course on earth, and are gone before to receive their doom. There it must see what before we heard of; either the hellish misery of undone souls, which have cast away all their hopes for ever, and the wicked devils which deceived them; or the perfected spirits of the just, the glorious angels, our glorified Redeemer, and the most glorious God. There they will soon see the truth of that word and that world which they doubted of; and quickly feel what they must trust to for evermore. Oh what a change is it to suddenly pass from our company, our dwellings, our business, our pleasures, and from all this world, and to see a world which we never saw before, and to enter presently upon the joys or sorrows which must never, never end or change! What a senseless thing is an ungodly man! that can either forget such a day and such a change as this, or can think of it without awakened resolutions, presently and with their utmost diligence to prepare! If they believe not God's word and the life to come, why do they not come and debate the case with us, and hear what we can say, till they are resolved upon the best inquiry, whether it be so indeed or not? Do they think that we can give them no better proof of it, than what their unstudied brains lay hold on? Or no better than the devil giveth them against it? But if they do believe it, Oh what self-condemning wretches are they! What! believe such a change as sure and near, and not prepare for

it! Believe that they must be in heaven or hell for ever! and yet live as if they cared not which of them it be!

S. I confess it is an evident truth and duty which you urge, and an undeniable madness in men to forget so great, and sure, and near a change. For death is a thing past all dispute: it is no controversy whether we must die. And a man that loveth himself should think then whither he must go next.

P. It is a shame either for the preachers or hearers, that so many sermons are preached of death! If there be no need of it, the shame is ours: but if their be, the shame is theirs. O man! what a dark, and dead, and sottish thing art thou become, that hast need to be told that thou must die! and need to be told it at every funeral! yea every day! and all too little! As if the place which we meet in did not tell it us, where we tread on the dust of so many generations! Our diseases and pains of body forewarn us: our weariness in our labours tells us that we have a body that must break at last. Our grey hairs tell us, as the golden leaves on the trees in autumn, that our fall is at hand. Our children tell us, that others are rising up in our steads, while we are going off the stage. Every bit that we eat and cup that we drink doth tell us what bodies we have, that require thus to be daily supported. Our every night's sleep warneth us, to prepare for that sleep, from which the resurrection only will awaken us. When we plough up and dig the earth for our seed, and cast it in, where it must be corrupt before it spring up again, we do but represent the digging of our graves, and the burial of this body till the rising day. Every time that the sun setteth at night and riseth again the next morning, it warneth

us how our lives must set and rise again : and so does every fall and spring. Every bell that tolleth or ringeth for the dead is our call to prepare to follow them. Every clock that striketh, hath a voice to call senseless sinners. See and hear, O man or woman, how thy time passeth away ! How quickly will thy last hour come ! Matt. xxiv. 44. Luke xii. 40. Matt. xxv. 10. Yea every breath that we fetch ourselves, and every stroke that our pulse doth beat, doth call to sinners. Your days are numbered ! your last pulse and your last breath is near at hand. O what abundance of preachers have we to tell us that we must die, and yet men live as if they did not believe it, or never had been warned to prepare !

S. But sure, sir, it is a thing that men know so well that they need not be told that they must die, but only to be taught better how to prepare for it.

P. I tell you, to the shame of corrupted nature, that men have need to be told and told again a thousand times, with the loudest voice that they must die. It was not a vain lesson which the philosopher taught the great emperor, " Remember that thou art mortal." O had I a voice that could be heard all over the land, to cry to all men, Remember that thou must die ; and could I speak it to their hearts, it would awaken the secure, it would startle the dreaming world, who are playing away their lives for nothing. I tell you the preacher that doth but thunder this in the ears of a sleeply worldly congregation. " Oh sinners, you must die, you must die, as you are alive you must die," doth not preach an unsuitable or unprofitable sermon. If you believe me not, answer me these few questions.

QUEST. 1. Why else are men so surprised with the fears of death when it is just coming? they knew all their lives before that it would come! and yet they live merrily and carelessly till it is just upon them! and then when the physician tells them there is no hope, O what heart-sinking terror are they sometimes in, as if they had never known that they must die till now! Surely there is a way to make death less terrible. And why is not this way used in time?

QUEST. 2. And what maketh such a difference between their healthy, and their dying thoughts? now nothing doth relish with them but the world and the flesh; and then they cry out, The world is vanity. Now nothing is so unwelcome to them as the motions of a holy life; but then they cry out with Balaam, "O that I might die the death of the righteous, and my last end might be as his," Numb. xxiii. 10. Now praying wearieth them; but then they cry for mercy, mercy, and learn to pray without book and without a teacher! Now they cannot bear him that telleth them of their sins; but then they can cry out as Judas, "I have sinned." Now they must not be stopped nor troubled in their sins; but then they trouble themselves more, and cry out, O that I had the time again which I have lost! O that God would try me once again! I would be a new man! I would lead a new life! I would never do as I have done! Then they can be serious in thinking of their change, and the dread of it amazeth them; and O that they could make sure of heaven! but now they regard it as little almost, as if it did not much concern them, while they have time, and helps and warning to make sure.

QUEST. 3. Why is it that their teachers never hear

them once seriously inquire, How should I make ready? and how shall I know where I must dwell for ever? If we can afford them no help herein at all, why do they desire us to counsel them on their death-bed? if we can why do we not hear this sooner from them? Do you understand Christ's parable of the unjust steward, Luke xvi. 4, 5. His wit is commended, that when he was to be turned away he seriously bethought him whither to go next, and provided himself of another habitation. Nature taught him to make some provision for his change. But we cannot get men that know past doubt that shortly they must leave this world for ever, to bethink them carefully whither they must go next; and how their poor souls may find a comfortable entertainment with God!

S. I pray you name some of the benefits that would come to men by the serious warnings and thoughts of death; otherwise we shall think that it is but troubling us before the time with the fears of that which cannot be prevented, and so the increasing of our sorrows.

P. O friend! I tell you, death is a powerful preacher; it teacheth many men that to the quick which we have preached twenty years in vain. We preach them asleep; but the sentence of death doth awaken them to purpose. I will begin with myself and the rest of my profession.

1. The serious thoughts of death do teach ministers how to preach, and the people how to hear. Who is so dull that if he thought that this were the last day that he should preach and live, would not importunately beg of his hearers to receive the gospel, and repent of sin, and turn to God, and save their souls?

Death awakeneth the preacher to awaken the hearers. We are dying while we are speaking, and you while you are hearing. The breath which we speak by is measuring out our time. We shall all be shortly silenced in the grave. It is your mercy, and our mercy, yet that we have tongues to speak, and you have ears to hear. But we preach and you hear as men in a boat, which is all the while swiftly carried down the stream, and will be quickly in the ocean of eternity; no wonder if Paul adjured Timothy to most constant and importunate preaching, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. And if Christ so often called out to sinners, He that hath an ear to hear let him hear. All that we have to say must be quickly said; and all that you will learn must be quickly learnt; even now or never. O how many a hundred times have I risen off my knees with shame and consternation, to think that a dying man in so great necessity could pray no harder at the door of eternity! and how many a time have I come down from the pulpit with shame and grief to think that I could speak with no more affection to men that are so near another world! that my heart did not melt over miserable sinners, and that I did not with tears and importunity entreat them! that I could so easily and quietly go away without a grant of that which I came for, when I knew not that ever I should speak to them more! methinks death should make us all better preachers, and you better hearers, were it well foreseen! it stirred up Peter to stir up his flock, knowing that speedily he must put off his tabernacle, 2 Pet. i, 13, 14. It stirred up Paul to rouse up Timothy to think that the time of his departure was at hand, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 6. It moved him, and melted his hearers when he told them that they must see his face no more, Acts xx. 38.

S. What other benefit doth foreseen death bring?

P. 2. It teacheth us the wisest estimate of all the wealth and honour and greatness of this world. For it showeth them all to us in their final state, and what they will prove to us in our greatest need. If all the congregation were sure that they were to die to-morrow, or the next week or month, how easily could we preach them into a contempt of the world! though it changed not their love to it (for they would still keep it if they could,) it would make them confess that all is vanity. Then what is riches worth? what are lands and sumptuous houses worth? what are honours and places of command worth? now are these, think you, better than a Christ? or worthy the purchasing with the loss of heaven? would not assurance of salvation now be better? suppose the preacher that cometh to comfort a dying man should come to him only with worldly comforts; suppose he says, Sir, be of good comfort, you have had many a merry cup; many a sumptuous feast; many a gallant entertainment; you have lived in honour and wealth and ease! would he not say, O but it is all past and gone, and I must never more enjoy it! if the preacher shall say, You have fair houses, and a great estate to comfort you; will he not say, O that is my sorrow, for I must leave them all for ever. The church-yard is that market-place where the things of this world are duly rated. If they will purchase you a pardon from God, or open heaven to you, value them, and spare not. Seek them and keep them, and use them as far as furthereth the service of God and your salvation, and will give true comfort to a dying man. But if all your plenty prepare but for this farewell, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then

whose shall all these things be which thou hast provided?" Luke xii. 20—such a parting is not worth so dear a price. Read Psalm. xlix. 6. 7, 13, 14.

S. What other benefit can you get by the thoughts of death?

P. 3. Death is the great disgracer of pride. It will tell you whether it be seemly for him to look big, and boast, and domineer to-day, who must shortly be buried in the society of bones and dust in darkness. O can that man be proud who is going to answer for all his sins, before the God that hateth pride, and must leave his beloved body in the earth? swelling with haughtiness to-day, and in the grave, and perhaps in hell to-morrow? O foolish mortals, if you know not and remember not, that you must come, and quickly come to this!

S. What else learn you by the foresight of death?

P. 4. It teacheth men how to value their mirth and sensual delight. All the pleasure of meat, drink, plays of lust, and all your fleshly accommodations are now past and gone, and never shall return. Your swine and ox are fed for your own table; and therefore are worth the cost: but is it worth the wasting of your estate and the loss of your soul too, to feed and pamper a corpse for the worms or grave? Is it more comfortable to a dying man to hear, "You have lived a merry life in the world," or to know that he shall live in the heavenly joys with his Redeemer?

S. What other lesson will death teach us?

P. 5. It will teach us how to spend our time. O precious time? how basely art thou esteemed by idle, voluptuous men! Now they can play it away, and prate it away, and idle it away in a hundred vanities, as if God had made their lives too long, and they knew not what to do with it; but when they hear,

You are past recovery, O then for more time! O that we might live but one year longer! O that we had now all that time to repent in, and make sure of heaven, which we spent in sports, and idleness, and worldliness! O that we had lived as obediently to God, and as holy lives as the strictest saints, so we had but their safety and hopes of heaven! O time, time, how art thou past away and gone! and all the world cannot call back one day or moment! O what a hateful word is pastime! O happy men that have hearts to use time for the ends that God created and redeemed them, before it is too late, and time, and soul, and heaven be lost. It is death that teacheth men the worth of time.

S. Have you any more to say of this?

P. 6. Death teacheth men how to behave themselves to each other. On a death-bed you will say that you forgive all the world. You dare not desire revenge then, lest God be revenged on you. And will you be worse living than dead? Doth oppression and persecution, and treading down the poor and low, beseem those who must so soon be levelled with the lowest, and be unable to stir away a worm that feedeth on their bodies?

S. Sir, I pray you lay me down those directions by which I may prepare for a safe and comfortable death.

P. In your health it must be the main business of your life to prepare for death. And for this purpose the following directions may be of use.

I. Bestow much care and diligence to strengthen your belief of the truth of God's word, of the immortality of the soul, and of the life to come. Nothing more perniciously strengtheneth temptations, killeth all hope, desire, and endeavour, than secret doubt-

ings whether God's word be true, and whether there be another life indeed for man or not. Uncertainties will hardly prevail against sense and present things. Uncertainties will hardly sufficiently comfort a departing soul, when all worldly comforts must be parted with for ever. Every doubt here is as water cast upon the fire: it quencheth all our desires and joys.

II. Be sure that you truly repent of your known sins—Luke xiii. 3, 5. For nothing makes death so frightful to us as our guilt; nothing else can make us reasonably fear whether God will save or damn our souls, but unpardoned sin. And the mercy of God is so great, and his promise so sure, that nothing can reasonably make us doubt of pardon, but that which maketh us doubt of the sincerity of our repentance, and faith in Christ. Spare not si nthen, but repent presently, repent deeply, confess it plainly, forsake it resolutely, and then it will not leave such fears in the soul, as shall make the sentence of death to be dreadful to us, as sin but half repented of will do. Sin is the sting of death; and true repentance hath the promise of forgiveness.

III. Put your souls, with all their sins and dangers, and all their interest, into the hand of Jesus Christ your Saviour; and trust them wholly with him by a resolved faith. It is he that hath purchased them, and therefore loveth them; it is he that is the Owner of them by the right of redemption. It is now become his own interest, even for the success and honour of his redemption, to save them. Be not too thoughtful about things unknown to you, but implicitly trust Christ with all these things; remembering that he knoweth what you know not; and as he possesseth heaven for you, till he bring

you to possess it; so he knoweth all these things unrevealed, for you, till he bring you to see and know them. If your most faithful friend were in the Indies, and invited you thither with the promises of the greatest wealth and pleasure, you would trust him, though you see it not yourselves, nor know the particulars distinctly. It is a great comfort to us, that we have a Head and Saviour in heaven; and that heaven and earth are in his power. He that saved you from sin and Satan's power, will save you from hell's, and Satan's torments, Acts xxvi. 18. Rom. viii. 34—36. If angels rejoice at our conversion, Christ and angels will joyfully receive victorious souls into the heavenly society, and welcome them to heaven with dearest love. Read often, and meditate on his special promises. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be," John xii. 26. And he is at the right hand of the majesty on high, Heb. i. 3. "If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also," John xiv. 2, 3. "Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me," John xvii. 24. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,—that mortality may be swallowed up of life.—We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 1—8. "To depart, and to be with Christ, is far better," Phil. i.

23. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13. "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43. "To the spirit of just men made perfect," Heb. xii. 23. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord; wherefore comfort one another with these Words," 1 Thess. iv. 17,18. "We receive a kingdom that cannot be moved," Heb. xii. 28. "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. i. 9. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Acts vii. 59. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more," Rev. iii. 12. 21.

But above all, those words of our risen Lord, I would have written over my sick bed, and on my heart. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my father and your Father; and to my God, and your God," John xx. 17.

Boldly then and quietly deliver up thy soul to the care of Christ; there is all in him which thou needest. Are you afraid of guilt, and the law, and the wrath of God, and hell? Remember that he is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, in whom the Father is well pleased; that he hath by once offering of himself perfected for ever them that are sanctified. That he was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world, John i.29. Heb. x. 14. 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Cor. i. 30. 1 John ii. 1, 2. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotton Son, that whosoever believeth in

him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 19—22. "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed himself by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner is for for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever," Heb. vi. 17—20. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest which cannot be touched by a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 14—17. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 55—57. Who by death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivereth them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage, Heb. ii. 14, 15.

Trust boldly your soul into the hand of such a Saviour, and distract not your mind with unbelieving fears. He wanteth neither power, nor wisdom,

nor love, Ezek. xvi. 8. xviii. 4. 1 Cor. vi. 19. Psa. cxix. 64. You may boldly and quietly trust him with his own. He hath testified his love at so dear a rate, that we should not question it, Gal. ii. 20. Rev. i. 5. To save us is his proper office and work, 1 John iv. 14. Eph v. 23. It is his covenant to save his body, Heb. ix. 15. 1 Tim. iv. 8. Heb. x. 36. James i. 12. He is our Judge himself, John v. 22. He hath the keys of hell and death, Rev. i 17, 18. His work in heaven is to prepare a glorious receptacle for us; and there he is interceding for us to that end, Heb. ii. 10. vii. 25. John xiv. 1—3. When you were received into the state of grace and reconciliation, you were entered into the outer part of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. iii. 2. x. 7. xiii. 11. 24. 31. 33. 44. 45. 47. Here you were made heirs, co-heirs with Christ, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Rom. viii. 17, 18. Gal. iv. 6. Eph. ii. 19. John xvii. 3. Rom. v. 8—11. 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5. Eph. i. 13, 14. iv. 30. Rom. viii. 16. and here you had God's pledge and earnest, and the first fruits. And will he not give us that, which he hath already given us so much right to? Our near relation to him assureth us, that he will not condemn his friends, his flesh, John xv. 14, 15. Eph. v. 29, 30. 2 Cor. vi. 17. 18. Is his love, his promise, his oath, his seal, as nothing to us? He would never have given us a heavenly mind and desire, nor set us on seeking it, if he would not have given it us, Matt. vi. 20, 21. 33. John iv. 14. vi. 27. Matt. vii. 7, 8. 1 Cor. xv. 58. Psa. lxxiii. 24. It is a faith in Christ which we must live and die by, if we will live and die in a well grounded peace.

IV. Devote yourself entirely to God, and make it your trade of life to please him; doing all the good

that you can to others for soul and body; that so your conscience may bear you witness at death, that notwithstanding your infirmities, the very business for which you lived in the world, was to serve your Lord and to do good, and not to pamper the flesh, nor to grow rich, nor to get into honour and applause with men.

Though our good works give nothing unto God, nor can men or angels merit anything of him, yet God who is holy is the lover of holiness, and the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. And nothing can reasonably make a dying man question his salvation, but the doubtfulness of his own sincerity in his covenant with God, and of his true repentance and sanctification. And no man can well judge his faith or repentance to be sincere, who liveth not as absolutely devoted to God. Therefore though you must abhor all thoughts of ascribing anything to your own faith or repentance, or holiness and sincerity, which is proper to God the Father, or to our Saviour, or to the Holy Ghost; yet without holiness none shall see God, Heb. xii. 14. for he hateth all the workers of iniquity, Psa. v. 5. And conscience will be conscience still; and its office is not to question whether God be God, and Christ be Christ, but whether we be christians. And he that ever so fully believeth in Jesus Christ, must find himself to be indeed a believer, and to be sanctified by his spirit, before he can comfortably die, or have any assurance of his own salvation, Rom. viii. 1. 8--13.

And there is no such full and satisfying evidence of that, as this testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not in fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in the world,

2 Cor. i. 12. that is, that we really lived not to the flesh, but unto God, and, how weakly soever, our main business in the world was to serve and please him, with all the powers and estate he gave us. And that we did not principally live to the world, and put God off with the leavings of the flesh, nor make his service our secondary business, and seek him and heaven but in the second place. O that we knew well how much a life of total resignation, devotedness, and serviceableness to God, doth tend to a quiet and comfortable death! We should live otherwise than most do.

V. Take heed of quenching the Spirit of grace. He is our life from Christ our Head. Whatever good we do in health or sickness, it must be by his gracious operation: you may think of Christ, and read over the promises, and think of the joys of heaven, and all will have little power upon you, if the Spirit help you not. You will but strive and come off with discouragement, and say, I cannot get assurance with all my examination, I cannot believe, I cannot reach to any powerful apprehensions of God, or heaven; I cannot choose but fear and doubt, even with the most evident arguments before my eyes. There is no effectual light in any knowledge, no holy love and delight in God, no spiritual life in any of our thoughts, but what is wrought by the illuminating, sanctifying, quickening Spirit. O therefore tenderly cherish and preserve this heavenly guest, as ever you would have joy in health or sickness! for it must be the joy of the Holy Ghost.

S. What is the cherishing, and what the quenching of the Spirit?

P. It is a great truth not sufficiently considered by the wiser sort of christians, that God in his course

of Government over the souls, even of the justified, doth exercise great rewards and great punishments here. And these are much more upon the soul within than upon the body without; even the giving of more of the operations of his Spirit, in his great reward, and the withholding, withdrawing, or denying its operations in his great punishment. The sin which provoketh him is unthankful neglect of convictions and holy persuasions of the Spirit, and much more wilful resistance of them, when the Spirit convinceth us, reproveth us, and striveth with our hearts, and we will not yield, but overcome it. And the punishment of withdrawing the Spirit's operations, is the more dangerous by how much the less perceived and lamented: usually the signs of this judgment are, for men to lose their life and love to goodness by degrees, and to grow indifferent in the matters of God: to grow formal in meditations, exhortations, and prayer, and to keep up only an affected fervency; to grow stranger to God and the life to come, and more bold with sin, and more worldly-wise, to prove duty to be no duty, and sin no sin, and to plead for every fleshly interest. Many a true christian that looseth not all grace, yet cometh to so low a state of faith, that faith doth but live, but acteth not with the conquering and quickening vigor as it ought.

And alas, I must tell you, that one gross sin, or many wilful lesser sins, may so quench the Spirit, as that many a year's time doth recover it; nay with some it is never recovered in the same degree to their death. O if we knew what one hour's sin may lose us this way, we would not commit it for a world.

S. Alas! but what if I have quenched the Spirit, is there no way to recover it? What must I do?

P. You must deal faithfully with yourself by deep repentance, and free confessions: you must mark what sinful lust or affection hath got possession of your heart, instead of holy spiritual affections: and you must set upon the mortifying of those lusts resolvedly; especially you must get far enough away from the temptations which have prevailed with you. You must be much in meditating on the greatest quickening truths, and plead them often and earnestly with your soul. You must use, if possible, the converse of lively spiritual christians: and in a word, the same means must be used again, which God blessed to your quickening at first: especially earnest prayer that God would restore that measure of his Spirit's operations which you have lost. And you must mark by what ways of omission you quenched the Spirit: and by the contrary it must be restored to you. And then in health and sickness you will have in you that heavenly fire, which will carry up your heart to God, and that Divine nature which will make heaven, and holiness connatural, and suitable, and desirable to you.

S. But how shall I know whether I have the Spirit? or whether I have more or less of it?

P. By the love of God, and holiness, and by the love of man, and a desire to do good; for these are its proper works.

S. But how shall I know that I love God truly?

P. When God's holy word, and the holy practice of it, and the thoughts of your perfect holiness in heaven with Christ and the holy angels, in the perfect love, praise and service of the most holy God, are all most pleasing to your mind, Rom. v. 5; viii. 39; John xiv. 15, 23; 1 John ii. 5; iii. 14, 16, 17; v. 3; iv. 12, 16; Eph. iii. 17; iv. 2, 15, 16; v. 2;

ii. 10—and more desired by you than the riches, honours and fleshly pleasures of this world. And when you long for the holiness of the world, and the prosperity of the church, and the good of the souls and bodies of all men; and pray most heartily for the hallowing of God's name and the coming of His kingdom, and the doing of His will on earth as it is in heaven; and when doing all the good you can in the world is your daily trade and pleasure. This is the sure evidence of the love of God and of His Spirit.

S. I have heard far different signs of it from some, as if it lay in impulses, raptures and revelation of more than is in the scripture; and I have heard others mock at all mention of the Spirit, as if there were no such thing.

P. Between these two malefactors the Church of Christ, in all ages, hath been crucified. But do you bless God who hath given you that in possession and experience which others which have it not can hardly know, 1 John v. 10, 11; Rom. viii. 1, 9, 13. And yet it were easy for them, were they considerate, to discern that the foresaid love of God and man is the true excellence of human nature, and that some have it as I described it, though not in perfection; and that no men are brought to it, but by the gospel and God's special blessing on it; which is by the operation of His Spirit.

VI. The sixth direction to prepare for death is, that you make it your chief care, to dwell continually in the sense of God's love; and be daily employed in studying the greatness of it, in the nature of God and the mercies of the gospel, and in all your own particular experiences; and that praise and thanksgiving be your daily work.

Distinctly note the parts of this direction.

1. If you can but keep the sensible apprehension of God's love continually upon your heart, it must needs make heaven desirable to you, 2 Tim. i. 7; Gal. iv. 6; Rom. v. 5; viii. 17, 39; Psa. xix. 1, 2; ciii. 3, 8, 11, 17; 1 John iv. 7, 8; John xvi. 27—and the drawings of God's love will overcome the fears of death.

2. Think much of the infinite perfection of God. Remember that His goodness is equal to His greatness; and what that is, look up to the heavens and think of all the world, and you may see. Therefore He is called love itself. And shall it be hard for a soul that desireth to please God, to believe that love itself doth love him, and that infinite goodness will be pleased with him in Christ?

3. The Son of God incarnate, in His whole work of redemption, is so wonderful a glass to reveal to man the love of God, that the studying of Christ doth as aptly tend to acquaint the soul with Divine love and loveliness, as the greatest beneficence of the greatest friend doth tend to convince us of his friendship, Eph. iii. 17—19; Tit. iii. 3—5; 1 John ii. 1, 2.

4. The remembering of all the great mercies of your lives, to your souls and bodies, in every place, and state, and company, will help to convince you that He that hath done all this for you, loveth you, Psa. ciii. 1—5; lxvi.; cxvi. And you may trust that God of love at death, who hath filled up your lives with the benefits of His love.

5. And if you make praise and thanksgiving to be half your prayers every day, and employ your heart and tongue still in them, this exercise of love to God will keep on your soul a sweet apprehension of His love to you, and make both health and sick-

ness easy, if not full of delight, Psa. cxlv. ; cix. 30 ; lxxi. 8, 15 ; lxiii. 3—6 ; xxxiv. 1 —3 ; cxlviii. ; cxlix ; cl.

To live in the sense of God's love ; and so in the exercise of love to God, by praises and holy desires, and good works, is the very first-fruits and foretaste of heaven on earth ; and is a fruit of believing more excellent than belief itself ; and comforteth the soul and draweth it to God by the most powerful way, even by experimental taste of His love and goodness. And he will more easily belive that there is a heaven for him, who hath the beginning and foretaste of it already.

VII. And a great part of your preparation lieth in this, that you daily live as in heaven while you are on earth, by faith, hope, and love, exercised in heavenly contemplation.

If you live as a stranger to heaven in health, you will be strange to it, most likely, in sickness ; and the soul will rather have terror than pleasure in thinking of going to a strange place, a strange God, strange company, and strange employment. Therefore Christ calleth us to lay up our treasure in heaven, Matt. vi. 20. that is, to make it the work of our lives so to use all our present time, and means, and mercies, as may best make sure of the heavenly reward. And where our treasure is, our hearts will be, Matt. vi. 21. If you believe that you have a far greater happiness reserved for you with God than this world affordeth, nature will teach you to desire your own happiness. And we are commanded, as being risen with Christ, to seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. To set our mind or affection on things above and not on things on the earth : because "we are

dead" to the world, "and our life," that is, our felicity, "is hid," or out of sight, "with Christ in God," in the sight and fruition of God in heaven. And "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear," in his glory to the sight of men, "than shall we also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 1—4, our happiness will be visible to all. And Phil. iii. 20, it is said, "Our conversation," or citizenship, is in heaven."

Remember daily that there is your Father, your Saviour, your Comforter, your home, your happiness, your glory, your friends, your interest and your greatest business. You are already heirs, and must quickly be possessors, Rom. viii. 15, 17, 18. "You are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an enumerable company," or ten thousands "of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than Abel's," Heb. xii. 23—24.

Therefore let me advise and entreat you that you do all that you do in the world with heaven still in your eye. Hear and read and pray as if heaven were open still before you. Resist temptations, trade and follow your business in the world as if heaven were still in sight; as a traveller holdeth on his journey in remembrance of the end.

And specially, use often to set yourself purposely at seasonable hours as you are able, to meditate on the heavenly glory.

Set often before your eyes the certainty, the nearness, the greatness of that glory; think how many

millions of holy souls are there in joy, while we are here in fears and cares; think of the excellent servants of God, who have passed thither through a world of trials, and were lately compassed with such infirmities as ours, and passed through death as we must do. Remember that we go not an untrodden path, but are followers of all the spirits of the just. Think how much better it is with them than with us; how they are freed from all our sins and sufferings, doubts and fears. O think what it is for a perfected holy soul to see the glorified Redeemer and all the holy company of saints and angels; yea, to see the glory of God Himself, and to have the knowledge of all His glorious works; to feel His love poured out unto us, and to be rapt up in loving and praising Him for ever, in the most transcendant joy and pleasure of the soul. Think of your holy acquaintance that are gone before you, and frequently take, as it were, a walk in the streets of the city of God; suppose you saw their glory and heard their concordant praises of their Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Let these kind of thoughts be so often and serious, that they may be your daily work and pleasure, and the conversation of your minds with God above.

And because your heart will be backward, drive it on, and as I told you about meditation, you must use to preach, as it were, to yourself. Let heaven be your subject; convince your heart with evidence, urge it with heavenly motives, solace it with heavenly comforts; and when it is dull turn your thoughts by petition to God, and beg his helps. Sometimes speak to yourselves, and sometimes reverently to God: and thus keep a holy communion and familiarity above; and this will make heaven desirable to you at a dying hour.

VIII. The next direction to prepare for death is—That you mortify the flesh in time of health, and see that nothing in this world be too dear and pleasing to you; and let not sense and imagination rule you.

If you be in love with any thing here, you will be the more unwilling to leave it. And if the flesh be too dear to you its sufferings will be the more grievous, and you will be the more loth to lay it to rot in the earth. And if you use to live too much by sight and sense, you will grow so familar with things sensible, and so strange to things unseen, that you will scarcely be able to see any further with the mind than you can see with your eyes; and scarcely anything will seem certain to you or be effectual with you which you see not.

But if you get your affections loosened from the world, and mortify the flesh, with its affections and desires, Rom. viii. 13. xiii. 13, 14. Gal. v. 24. 2 Cor. iv. 16. 18. v. 7. Col. iii. 5, 6. and become indifferent to the things of sense; and use to overrule your sense by faith, and live most upon unseen things; there will be little to entangle, and hinder the willingness of your departing souls.

IX. The last part is more easily done: that is—Settle your worldly estate and affairs so, as one should do that is ready to depart. Make your will, that none may contend about your estate when you are dead. If you have wronged any, make them restitution. If you are fallen out with any, be quickly reconciled, and forgive them.

S. You have told me how to prepare for death in health. I pray you tell me next how to prepare further in sickness.

P. I must not here overwhelm you with multi-

tudes of directions, nor set you upon long and hard tasks of meditations. For usually nature, through pains and weakness, is unable for much work. It is the time of health which is the working time. Yet because something is then to be done, especially by them that have longer sicknesses, which destroy not their reason, I shall briefly advise such—

1. Mistake not sickness and death, as if there were more harm in it, than there is indeed. Believe not flesh and sense in this, which cannot see into the love and wisdom of God, which ordereth it, Heb. xii. 8—12. 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32. nor unto that quiet fruit of righteousness, which is the end. Labour therefore to get the benefit of it, to find out your sin, and repent of it, and abhor it, and see more effectually the vanity and vexation of the world; and remember what a mercy it is, that man who is so loth to die, should end his days in such pain and weakness, as make him weary of himself, and make him the more willing to be dissolved. For though this alone, without faith and love, will draw no man's heart to heaven, or save him; yet such a help against the sinful love of life and fear of death, is no small mercy. Get but the benefit of sickness, and experience will reconcile you to to the providence of God, and prevent repining. 2. Beg of God, for the sake of your Redeemer, such assistance and operations of his Spirit, as your low and weak condition needeth, and as are suitable to a dying man, Psa. xli. 3. 2 Kings xx. 1—11. Isa. xxxviii. He hath great help and grace for great necessities.

3. Renew your repentance and confessions of sin, and warn all about you to learn by your experiences, and to set their hopes and hearts on heaven, and to make it the work of all their lives to prepare for

such a change. O tell them what deceit and mischief you have found in sin! What vanity and vexation you have found in the world! What goodness you have found in God and holiness! What comfort you have found in Christ, and his promises, and the hopes of endless glory! And what a miserable case you had now been in, if you had no better a portion than this world, and nothing to comfort you but the pleasures of sin which now are all your shame and discomfort. Advise them to live as they would die, and tell them how little all the world doth signify to a dying man; call on them not to be deceived by such baits, as all dying men since Adam have confessed to be but vanity; call on them to turn without delay, and not to pamper a body for the worms, but to set themselves presently with all their hearts, to receive their Saviour, and to obey his Spirit, and word, and to live to God, and to make much of their short uncertain time, and to make sure of everlasting joys, whatever become of the flesh and and world.

4. Renew your believing thoughts of God's love; and of all the mercies of your life, which he hath given you. Instead of sorrowing that they are at an end, rejoice with thankfulness for what you have had. O think what a mercy it is to be born in a land and age of light! To have had all the teaching, and means, and warnings, and deliverances which you have had! And to have had that effectual assistance of God's Spirit, which opened your eyes, and turned you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God! That all your sins are pardoned through Christ, and that you are reconciled to God, and adopted through him, and sealed by the Spirit to the heavenly inheritance! O triumph in that love which hath

thus delivered you, and brought you so near your journey's end, and saved you from so many temptations of Satan, and from the flesh, and this deceitful world! 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. 2 Cor. v. 1—8. Think of God's goodness and love, as exceeding the goodness and love of the best of creatures, infinitely more than the sun exceedeth a candle in light and heat. And shall a poor servant of his who hath endeavoured, in sincerity, though in sinful weakness, to do his will, and hath a High Priest interceding for him in heaven, be afraid to go to such a God? What can encourage and draw up a soul, if infinite goodness cannot do it? If God be as loving as my dearest friend; if he be as good and amiable as the sun is light and glorious, as the heavens are spacious, as the earth is firm, as the sea is deep; shall I not joyfully give up my soul into his hands? and confidently yield to his disposal? and fearlessly come to him at his call? O that we knew the goodness of God! What a full content and satisfaction would it be to us! and turn our fears into fervent love, and earnest longings for his glory!

5. Now steep your souls in the believing thoughts of the heavenly glory, to which you are going. O now remember that the time is but short, till you shall sin no more, and fear no more and suffer no more! Till you shall know God and his works, not only as much as you can now desire, but as much as then your heart can wish, and your enlarged capacity receive; till you shall love him more than now you can desire to love him; and your joy shall be greater than now you can conceive and wish. When God shall be more to your soul for ever, than the sun is to your eyes, or your soul is to your body! O what an hour will it be, when you shall be newly

entered into the city of God, the heavenly society, and sing your first song of joyful praise in the blessed choir to God and to the Lamb! O what an enemy, what an unreasonable thing is unbelief! that can make us stand trembling without the doors, and afraid to enter, while millions of our brethren are rapt up in triumphant joys within! while our Lord prepareth us our place, and with all his holy angels is desirous of our presence, and the heavenly host will welcome us with joy!

6. Now confidently deliver up your souls into the hand of your Father and your Redeemer, and give over distrustful caring for yourselves.

Will you not trust the God and Father of your spirits, who is love itself? Will you not trust your Saviour, that hath saved you so far already; and hath saved so many millions before you? Trust him with his own: believe it, he loveth you better than you love yourself. He is as loth that you should be damned as you are to be damned, and more willing to save you than you are to be saved. O woe to you, if through all your life he had not showed himself more willing than you. Trust him against all the accusations of the law! trust him as the Satisfier of God's legal justice! trust him as the Meriter of life eternal! as the Justifier of those that could not be justified by the law of innocency, and their righteous works! as the Mediator of the new covenant, sealed by his blood, by which free forgiveness and life is given to all true believers! trust him as the King and Judge of all; and as the Advocate of the faithful; and our great High Priest who intercedeth for us, and hath himself possession of the glory to which he hath promised to bring us!

Trust him implicitly and absolutely. Christ

came to recover us from ourselves to God. Care then how to know your Creator and Redeemer; his power, wisdom, and love; care how to trust him with soul and body, and to do your duty; and then care for no more, Matt. vi. 25—27. 31. 34. Luke xii. 22. 1 Pet. v. 7. Phil. iv. 6. but leave soul and body more quietly and comfortably to his love and will, than if they were absolutely at your own will, to be, and do, and have what you would wish. For God is fitter to choose for you, and to dispose of you than yourself. Rest your soul in the will of God through your Redeemer! In that will which is infinitely good, and which is the beginning, guide, and end of all things, and the only rest of souls.

7. Let all these holy affections be exercised in your expressions, if your disease allow you strength to express yourself in words. Magnify God's goodness, and speak good of his name, and word, and ways; not by a dissembled affectation, but from your heart: make others to see that there is a reality in the comforts of faith and hope; and that the death of the righteous is so desirable, as maketh their lives desirable also. Your tongues are given you to praise the Lord: they have but a little while more to speak: let their last work be done to his glory, as strength will bear. Tell men what you have found him, and speak of the glory of his kingdom which you expect, that the hopes and desires of others may be excited.

And turn your last words to God himself in prayer and praises, beginning the work which you must do in heaven. Imitate your dying Lord, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit," Luke xxiii. 46. And his first martyr, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59.

The Prayer of a dying believer.

O Lord, thy mercy brought me into the world, thy mercy chose my parentage, education, and habitation : it brought me up ; it kept me from a thousand dangers , it attempered my body, and furnished my mind ; it gave me teachers, books, and helps ; yea it gave me a Redeemer, and a promise of life, and the word of salvation ! it gave me all the operations of thy Spirit, which touched and turned my sinful heart ! all my repenting and resolving thoughts ! all the forgiveness of my manifold sins ! all the sweet meditations of thy love ! and the experience of thy good and pleasant service ! the comfortable hours which I have had, in secret thoughts, in public worship, on thy holy days, at thy holy table, among thy people ; all these have been the dealings of thy love. All my deliverences from temptation and sin ; from enemies, death, and danger ! all my preservations from the deceits of the world, and from its troubles ; from errors against thy sacred truth, and from backsliding ! all my recoveries from my too frequent falls, and pardon my my daily sins ! the quietness thou hast given my troubled conscience ; and the tranquillity of my life, notwithstanding my sins ; all the use which it has freely pleased thee to make of me, an unworthy wretch, for the good of any, for soul or body ! all these are the pledges of thy wondrous love ! and shall I be afraid to come to such a God ? Hath mercy filled up all my life, and brought me now so near the end, and shall I not trust it after so much trial ? It is heaven that thou madest me for ; and heaven that Christ did purchase for me ; it is heaven which thou didst promise if I would be thine ; and it is heaven which

I consented to take for my portion, and for which I did covenant to forsake the world, Luke xviii. 22, 23. Matt. vi. 20, 21, 33. Col. iii. 4, 5. And O that I had more entirely done it! for I now find how little reason I have to repent of my covenant! it is heaven which thy Spirit of grace, and merciful providences have all this while been preparing me for! And shall I now be fearful and unwilling to possess it?

O thou that knowest how deadly an enemy unbelief is to thy honour and my soul, I beseech thee show that thou takest not me, but it for thy foe. O send that heavenly light into my mind, which may banish and confound it. Let it not blaspheme thy truth, and imprison and blind and torment my soul. O thou that givest the word, the Saviour, the heaven which I must believe, deny me not that faith by which I must believe them: earth and flesh are dungeons of darkness and despair; there is with us no sun to show us thy face. It must be thy glory whose reflections must reveal thy glory to us; and a light from heaven which must show us heaven! O send one beam, one beam, Lord, of that heavenly light into this darkened sinful soul; that with Stephen I may see in my passage the glory of my blessed Lord, to whom I go! and with Simeon may gladly say, Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation! One beam of thine will drive away the powers of darkness, and banish all these doubts and fears, and let in somewhat of heaven into my soul, before it is let into heaven! O blessed Spirit, the illuminator of dark imprisoned souls, remember not all my resistances of thy grace, and forsake me not in this last necessity of my life, and leave me not to the powers of

darkness and unbelief! though glory be not openly seen till it is enjoyed, let me now when I am so near it, have such a sight of it by faith, as is suitable to this low and darker state. O thou that art the Spirit of life, so quicken and actuate this sluggish soul, that the last part of my race may be run with vigour, and the last act of my life may be done in evidence of the heavenly influence, and may be more like to the heavenly employment than all the rest hath been! O thou that art the Sanctifier and Comforter of souls, now kindle that fire of heavenly love in me, and give me some taste of the celestial joys, which may feelingly tell me that there is a heaven indeed; and may be the witness within me, and the pledge and earnest that I shall live with Christ. My flesh, and my own heart now fail; the world and all therein is nothing to me; I am taking my everlasting farewell of them all; but one beam of his face, and one taste of his love, who is my portion for ever, will be strength and joy to my departing soul, and better than this life, and all its pleasures, Psa. lxiii. 3. Come, Lord, with these seasonable comforts into my soul, that my soul may comfortably come to thee! my life had been but death and darkness, and disaffection to God, if thou hadst not been in me a spirit of life, and light, and love; the tempter had else been still too strong and subtle for me; and how then shall I deal with him myself, when the languishing of my body disableth my soul? thou despiseth not art and reason; I thank thee for the use I had of them in their season. But one beam of thy light, one spark of thy love, one motion of thy heavenly life, will better confute the enemy of faith, than my disputes can do; the Divine nature incited by Divine inspiration

must do much more than human art. Teach me effectually but to love and praise thee, and it shall powerfully prove to me that there is a heaven, where I shall joyfully love and praise thee for ever.

Alas, dear Lord, I am ashamed that to love and praise thee should be to my soul a work of difficulty that it is not more natural and easy to me, than to love and praise any created thing or person whatsoever! what shall I love if not goodness and love itself, which made me purposely to love him! who redeemed me, that by love he might win my love; and sanctified me to dispose my soul to love him? what shall I praise, if not infinite perfection? the glory of whose power, wisdom, and goodness doth shine forth in the whole creation! heaven and earth praise thee? and am I no part of heaven or earth? the whole creation doth proclaim thy glory! and am I none of thy creation? thy very enemies when redeemed, reconciled, and forgiven, do praise the love and grace of their Redeemer! and am I not one of these? the great Teacher of the Church is the Schoolmaster of love and praise! and have I not learned them yet, who have so long had so excellent a Teacher? Thy saints all love thee, for it is the essence of a saint; they praise thee, for it is the work of saints; and am I none of these? I am less than the least of all thy mercies! but it is not the least of thy mercies which I have received; and if a life full of mercies has not brought forth a life full of love and praise, O yet let it end in a loving and praising death!

Glory be to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men! holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. Of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all things;

thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever; even to our Redeemer who washeth us in his blood, and maketh us kings and priests to God. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints! Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou art holy! Amen; halleluiah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Praise our God, all ye his servants; and ye that fear him, both small and great. Praise ye the great Redeemer of the world, who is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: the beloved Son, in whom we are reconciled and adopted, and in whom the Father is well pleased: who will smite the nations with the sword of his mouth, and rule them with a rod of iron, and treadeth the wine-press of the wrath of God; who hath the keys of death and hell, and is King of kings, and Lord of lords. My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour, who hath redeemed me from my low and lost estate; for his mercy endureth for ever! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name; bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and hath often healed thy diseases! who redeemed thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with love and tender mercies! Whom have I in heaven but thee? and what is there on earth desirable besides thee? the Lord taketh pleasure in his people, he will beautify the meek with salvation.

In thy light we shall see light; thou shalt make us drink of the rivers of thy pleasure; in thy presence is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Goodness and mercy have followed me all my days; and thou hast showed me the path of life. Let my heart therefore be glad, and my glory rejoice; and let me leave this flesh to rest in hope. Let the heavens rejoice: and O that the earth were taught to imitate them in thy praise! Thine angels and the triumphant church do glorify thee: O train up this militant church on earth, in love and concord to this joyful work! and let all flesh bless thy holy name, for ever and ever! let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord; and so let me breathe out my departing soul; and thou wilt not cast away the soul that cometh unto thee in love and praise. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; who art the Father of spirits, and my Father in Christ! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; and present it justified and spotless to the Father! and, O our Forerunner, take me to thyself, who being risen sentest this message even to sinners; Say to my brethren; I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God. Amen.

[The "Poor Man's Family Book," from which the preceding work is abridged, concludes with various prayers and hymns: these are not retained, as there are many modern publications of this description.]

THE END.

Author Baxter, Richard
Title Man's true guide to Heaven.
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